DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 314 589 CE 053 895

AUTHOR Denny, Verna Haskins; And Others
TITLE Focus on Adult Literacy: Expectations, Experiences and Needs of New York City's Adult Literacy Students. Phase One of a Longitudinal Study.
INSTITUTION Literacy Assistance Center, New York, NY.
SPONS AGENCY New York City Mayor's Office of Educational Services, NY.
PUB DATE 89
NOTE 88p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC04 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Access to Education; Adult Basic Education; *Adult Literacy; Basic Skills; English (Second Language); Functional Literacy; Language Proficiency; *Limited English Speaking; *Literacy Education; Outcomes of Education; *School Holding Power; Student Educational Objectives; Student Participation; *Student Recruitment; Urban Areas
IDENTIFIERS *New York (New York)

ABSTRACT

The first phase of a longitudinal study of the factors that encourage adults to enter and remain in adult literacy programs and the effects program participation has on their lives obtained information on students in a sample of 70 classes in 1988-89. The sample was stratified on literacy provider agency, whether the class was basic education (BE) or English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), program size, day or evening class time, and geographic location within Manhattan, Queens, Brooklyn, and the Bronx. Data collection involved interviews with 663 students at 38 adult literacy program sites and a mailed survey instrument completed by 25 program managers. The following were among the study's findings: (1) approximately 40 percent of the students had to wait an average of 3.5 months for instruction to begin once they made the commitment to attend but the waiting period did not affect the reported degree of satisfaction students felt after beginning their programs; (2) ESOL students were much more optimistic than BE students about the possibility of getting a promotion or new job after learning their new skills; (3) ESOL students, unlike the BE students, rarely reported leaving a previous program because they were discouraged or dissatisfied; and (4) a higher proportion of BE students than ESOL students seek academic credentials such as the General Educational Development certificate or a college diploma. (The document contains 52 tables and 6 figures as well as appendices documenting study methodology and sample size; an eight-item bibliography is also provided.) (CML)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED314589

FOCUS ON ADULT LITERACY:

EXPECTATIONS, EXPERIENCES AND NEEDS OF NEW YORK CITY'S ADULT LITERACY STUDENTS

Phase One of a Longitudinal Study

Verna Haskins Denny
Janice Lee Albert
Joan Manes

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

O M Conert

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

The Literacy Assistance Center, Inc.
15 Dutch Street
New York, New York
June 1989

This research was conducted under a contract with the New York City Mayor's Office of Educational Services.

CE053895

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

PREFACE i

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY iii

INTRODUCTION 1
- Background 1
- Longitudinal Research Project 2

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROGRAMS 5
- Program Services 5
- Recruitment and Enrollment 8

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE STUDENT POPULATION 11
- Age and Gender 11
- Ethnicity, Nationality, and Native Language 12

FAMILY LITERACY AND EDUCATION 19
- Family Literacy Backgrounds 19
- Educational History 22
- Prior Participation in Adult Education 27

EMPLOYMENT AND LITERACY 31
- Employment and Public Assistance Status 31
- Relevance of Literacy Skills to Employment 38

STUDENTS' GOALS, ACHIEVEMENTS, AND CONTINUING PARTICIPATION 43
- Students' Goals, Achievements and Levels of Satisfaction 43
- Students' Perceptions of Program Completion and Plans After Leaving 48
- Reasons Students Might Leave their Current Programs 50
- Discussion 51

SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS 53
- Types of Instruction 53
- Non-Literacy Services 54
- Recruitment 55
- Family Literacy 56
- Employment 58

APPENDIX A 63

APPENDIX B 67

APPENDIX C 77

LIST OF TABLES

		Page
Table 1:	Instructional Services Offered by Programs	5
Table 2:	BE Levels Offered	6
Table 3:	ESOL Levels Offered	6
Table 4:	Non-Instructional Services Offered By Programs	7
Table 5:	Means by Which Students Found Out About Programs	8
Table 6:	Age Distribution by Gender (BE)	12
Table 7:	Age Distribution by Gender (ESOL)	12
Table 8:	Birthplace of BE Students	13
Table 9:	Ethnicity (BE)	13
Table 10:	Year of Arrival in New York City	14
Table 11:	Birthplace of ESOL Students	14
Table 12:	Year of Arrival in New York City	15
Table 13:	Ethnicity (ESOL)	15
Table 14:	Languages Spoken by ESOL Students	16
Table 15:	Reading Materials in Students' Homes While Growing Up (BE)	20
Table 16:	Reading Materials in Students' Homes While Growing Up (ESOL)	21
Table 17:	Students' School Attendance (BE)	22
Table 18:	Location of Elementary School (BE)	23
Table 19:	Location of High School (BE)	23
Table 20:	Reasons for Leaving School Prior to Completion (BE)	24
Table 21:	Students' School Attendance (ESOL)	25
Table 22:	Location of Elementary School (ESOL)	25
Table 23:	Location of High School (ESOL)	26
Table 24:	Reasons for Leaving School Prior to Completion (ESOL)	27
Table 25:	Type of Previous Program	28
Table 26:	Current Jobs Held by Students (BE)	31
Table 27:	Months Working in Current Job (BE)	32
Table 28:	Previous Jobs Held by Students (BE)	32
Table 29:	Months on Previous Job (BE)	33
Table 30:	Employment Status by Age (BE)	34
Table 31:	Current Jobs Held by Students (ESOL)	35
Table 32:	Months Working in Current Job (ESOL)	36
Table 33:	Previous Jobs Held by Students (ESOL)	36
Table 34:	Employment Status by Age (ESOL)	37
Table 35:	How Well Read on Job (BE)	39
Table 36:	How Well Write on Job (BE)	40
Table 37:	Will Improving Reading and Writing (BE)	40
Table 38:	Will Improving Reading and Writing (ESOL)	41
Table 39:	Why Students Decide to Attend Adult Literacy Programs (BE)	43
Table 40:	Reasons for Staying in the Program (BE)	44
Table 41:	Satisfaction (BE)	45
Table 42:	Why Students Decide to Attend Adult Literacy Programs (ESOL)	46
Table 43:	Reasons for Staying in the Program (ESOL)	47
Table 44:	Satisfaction (ESOL)	48
Table 45:	Plans to Continue Education	49
Table 46:	Employment Plans of BE Students by Current Employment Status	50
Table 47:	Employment Plans of ESOL Students by Current Employment Status	50
Table 1A:	Comparison by Gender for Sample and Data Base Adult Literacy Populations (Percentages)	69
Table 2A:	Comparison by Public Assistance for Sample and Data Base Adult Literacy Populations (Percentages)	73

Table 3A: Comparison of Program Schedules for Sample and Data Base Adult Literacy Populations (Percentages) 73
Table 4A: Comparison of BE Entry Level for Sample and Data Base Adult Literacy Populations (Percentages) 74
Table 5A: Comparison of ESOL Entry Level for Sample and Data Base Adult Literacy Populations (Percentages) 74

LIST OF FIGURES

Page

Figure 1A: Comparison by Age of Basic Education Sample and Data Base Populations 68

Figure 2A: Comparison by Age of ESOL Sample and Data Base Populations 68

Figure 3A: Comparison by Race/Ethnicity of Basic Education Sample and Data Base Populations 71

Figure 4A: Comparison by Race/Ethnicity of ESOL Sample and Data Base Populations 71

Figure 5A: Comparison by Employment Status of Basic Education Sample and Data Base Populations 72

Figure 6A: Comparison by Employment Status of ESOL Sample and Data Base Populations 72

PREFACE

In 1983 the City of New York entered into an agreement with the State and the Municipal Assistance Corporation (MAC) to commit MAC economic development funds over a four-year period to expand and upgrade the city's adult literacy programs. The agreement formed the basis of an innovative new program -- the New York City Adult Literacy Initiative (NYCALI) -- jointly sponsored by the New York City Mayor's Office and the State Education Department (SED). Today the Initiative is supported by State Employment Preparation Education funds and other State and Federal resources administered by SED, and by direct contributions from New York City, which in 1988 incorporated its allocation to the program into its base budget. As part of this Initiative, the Mayor's Office entered into a contract with the Literacy Assistance Center (LAC). As one of its functions, the LAC serves as a source of data collection and research to the Initiative.

A major aspect of this work has been the creation of a citywide data base which contains information about demographic characteristics and program outcomes of the individual students who participate in the Initiative programs. The data base is the most comprehensive set of information on adult literacy students in the nation.

Findings from the data base are discussed on an ongoing basis with a broad group of adult literacy practitioners, researchers, and policy makers. The process of reviewing the data base analyses with the adult literacy community has led to the identification of new areas for research, some of which require different methods of investigation. This longitudinal study of adult learners represents one example of supplemental research conducted by the Center.

The LAC wishes to thank the programs, practitioners, and students who participated for their contributions of time, attention, space and intimacies. It is due only to their openness that we are able to develop so real a portrait of the family of adult learners -- their histories, needs and goals.

As we publish this report, we are also preparing the analysis of data collected during the first year follow-up interviews with the same individuals who provided information for this volume. The portrait that is emerging will constitute a unique contribution to the field of adult literacy and help to better serve student needs and respond to their interests.

Particular thanks to:

- Jacqueline Cook, former Executive Director of the LAC, under whose direction this project was launched.
- Marian L. Schwarz, former Coordinator of the Mayor's Office of Youth Services, whose foresight and leadership in the New York City Adult Literacy Initiative supported the pursuit of in-depth research in adult literacy.
- Deborah Fish Ragin, former Research Coordinator at the LAC who supervised the initial phases of this project.
- Stan Schneider and Fran Schorr of Metis Associates who were responsible for data collection and preliminary analysis.
- And, once again to each of the Central Office staff, and to the practitioners and adult learners at the programs of the Board of Education, City University of New York, Community Development Agency and the Brooklyn, New York and Queens Public Libraries.

Delia L. Council
Acting Executive Director
June, 1989

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

To increase our understanding of the factors which encourage adults to enter and remain in adult literacy programs and of the effects of program participation on their lives, the first phase of a longitudinal study of adult literacy students was undertaken by the Literacy Assistance Center during the program year 1987-1988. The project was designed to obtain information about students' educational and family backgrounds, employment histories, and reasons for attending programs. Information on students' achievements and changes in their lives since entering literacy programs was also collected during this initial phase of the study. Follow-up interviews being conducted in 1988-1989 will provide further information on this group of students, whether they have remained in or left programs.

The goals of this first stage of research were as follows:

(i) To describe the significant demographic characteristics of adult students in Basic Education and English for Speakers of Other Languages programs.

(ii) To gain knowledge of the educational and family literacy backgrounds of the students.

(iii) To learn about the students' past and present participation in the labor force and public assistance programs as well as their employment aspirations.

(iv) To describe the desires and needs which motivate students to attend programs.

(v) To determine the types of accomplishments and level of satisfaction students experience in their programs.

Information was obtained from students and program managers at 38 adult literacy program sites. A stratified sample of 70 classes selected on the basis of such characteristics as literacy provider agency (LPA)[1], instructional type (i.e., Basic Education, English for Speakers of Other Languages), program size, day/evening classes, and geographic location within Manhattan, Queens,

[1] The literacy provider agencies in New York City are the Board of Education, the City University of New York, the Community Development Agency which oversees literacy programs at community-based organizations, and the three public library systems.

Brooklyn, and the Bronx.[2] Individual interviews were conducted with 663 students during the Spring of 1988. In addition, 25 program managers provided data about their programs and services in a mailed survey. A summary of important findings with brief comments from the first phase of this study is presented below.

Program Descriptions

The survey found that the programs serving adult learners have the following features:

- Most programs offer both Basic Education (BE) and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) courses.
- A range of other instructional services (e.g., basic skills taught in languages other than English, and math are also offered).
- These services are provided in class settings (100% of programs); small groups (50% of programs); lab instruction (50% of programs); and tutorial services (33% of programs).
- Programs offer a wide range of non-instructional services, (e.g., general counseling services, job services, child care and citizenship education).

Many of the students interviewed were not aware of the availability of supplemental services. For instance, most programs reported that they offer counseling services, yet only one-third of the students at these programs knew that counseling was part of their program.

Recruitment

Knowledge of the recruitment process is essential to effective delivery of program services.

- Recruitment of adults is most often undertaken within a small geographic area near the specific program.
- Programs employ a variety of methods to recruit students, including flyers, posters, and word-of-mouth.
- Students usually said they learned about their program through informal social networks, social service and educational institutions, and media advertisements.
- Two-thirds of the students contacted a program immediately after deciding to attend, while one-third hesitated to enroll or could not find an appropriate program.
- Approximately 40% of the students had to wait for instruction to begin though they had made the commitment to attend.

---

[2] Less than 2% of all New York City adult literacy students reside in Staten Island and fewer than 1% attend programs in that borough.

- On the average, students reported waiting three and one-half months to begin studying after signing up for a program.

The students interviewed were willing to wait and eventually began an adult literacy program, and the waiting period did not significantly affect the reported degree of satisfaction students felt after beginning their programs. However, information is needed on those adults who become discouraged at this point in the process and give up before they have a chance to begin studying.

Demographic Characteristics of Sample Population

The student population is highly diverse, as illustrated below:

- Nearly two-thirds of the students are female, while just over one-third are male.
- The majority of students are between 25 and 44 years of age.
- The sample population is compromised of 43% BE students and 57% ESOL students.
- Over one-half of the BE students were born in the United States, more than two-thirds of these individuals were born in the New York metropolitan area.
- Nearly 37% BE students did not speak English at home when they were young.
- The BE sample population consists of Blacks (52%), Hispanics, (37%), Whites (5%) and Asians (5%).
- Almost all of the ESOL students were born outside of the United States: 10% were from the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico; 40% were born in the other areas of the Caribbean; 25% came from Latin America; and 17% were from Asia.
- The ESOL sample population consists of Hispanics (53%), Blacks (23%, Asians (20%) and Whites (3%).

Student's Past Educational Experiences

Previous educational experiences were examined to gain insight into students' needs and participation patterns.

<u>BE Students</u>

- Approximately 60% of the BE students interviewed for this study had fathers and/or mothers who had completed high school or gone beyond high school.

- Most BE students reported having books in their homes when they were growing up; 25% had magazines and/or newspapers; and 50% were read to as children.

- Over 50% of the BE students attended high school, 63% of them in the New York City metropolitan area. Over 50% of BE students left school between 15 and 17 years of age; 20% left school between the ages of 12 and 14; and, 20% left school between 18 and 20 years of age.

- The older BE students tended to have ended their formal schooling at an earlier age than had their younger counterparts.

- BE students left school because of family problems (33%), personal reasons (33%), for work or for financial reasons (20%) and because of failing (18%) or being unhappy with school (5%).

- Thirty-three percent of the BE students have attended adult education programs in the past, most often another BE class.

ESOL Students

- Forty percent of the ESOL students, have mothers and/or fathers who had completed high school.

- Almost all of the ESOL students said they had books in their homes when they were growing up, and almost 60% of the ESOL students said someone read to them as children.

- Approximately 25% of the ESOL students attended high school; nearly 12% went to college.

- Family problems and personal reasons were the most common responses given for leaving school among the ESOL students; ESOL students rarely said they left school because of academic problems.

- Twenty-five percent of the ESOL students have attended adult education programs in the past, and most had attended the same type of program they were attending at the time of the interview.

The fact that most BE students educated in the U.S. attended school until they were 15 years of age or older suggests that low level literacy skills, at least for younger students, are not so much the result of a lack of formal education but rather a failure to gain proficiency during the years that they were in school. Over one-fifth of the BE students reported attending ESOL programs in the past. Though this study did not examine English proficiency among BE students, this pattern may indicate a need for higher level ESOL classes, so that places in BE classes are not inappropriately filled by students not able to keep up with instruction designed for native speakers of English.

ESOL students rarely report leaving a previous program because they were dissatisfied or discouraged, unlike BE students who give this reason frequently. It is possible that BE students become discouraged because of previous negative experiences with formal schooling, as reflected in some of the reasons given by BE students for leaving school as youths. In addition, BE students often come to programs with the goal of obtaining their GED. They may not realize or be willing to admit that their reading skills are too weak to accomplish this goal within a short time period. This may lead them to change programs or leave. In contrast, ESOL students, wishing to learn to speak English, may view their education as an ongoing process, not measured by a degree obtained within a set period of time.

Employment and Literacy

Adult literacy programs serve the needs of working students as well as those not active in the labor force.

- Fifty percent of BE students were employed at the time of the interview; nearly two-thirds of these students worked full-time.
- The employed BE students worked in service occupations (40%); in clerical or sales occupations (20%); and professional, technical, or managerial positions (16.4%).
- In the sample of BE students, slightly over one-half were not employed.
- Almost 60% of the ESOL students interviewed were employed, the vast majority on a full-time basis.
- ESOL students were working in service occupations (33%), benchwork (22%), and clerical or sales positions (13%).
- Among the ESOL sample population, slightly more than 40% of the students were not employed.
- Little movement across occupations was found when comparing previous employment patterns with current jobs.
- A majority of students expressed a desire to change jobs or occupations after completing their programs.

Literacy in the Workplace

Awareness of the specific skills required of adult learners at work is needed if programs are to affect employment patterns.

- Nearly 80% of working BE students read on their current job.
- Fifty-five percent of the working BE students reported that they write in their present positions.
- Over 80% of the BE students reported that they read and write very well or well enough to do the reading and writing tasks at their current jobs.
- Virtually all employed BE students felt that improving their reading and writing skills would help them do better at their current job, whereas only one-half felt that such improvement would help them get a promotion, and 60% saw improved skills as a factor in obtaining a new job.
- Forty-three percent of the ESOL students read on their jobs.
- Twenty-eight percent of ESOL students said they write as part of their job responsibilities.
- Over 90% of ESOL students stated that improved reading and writing would allow them to change jobs, 85% felt that with new skills they could do better at their current job and 75% felt their improved skills would help gain a promotion.

ESOL students' responses about the use of reading and writing at work revealed a dramatically different pattern from that of BE students. ESOL students were much more optimistic about the possibility of getting a promotion or a new job than were BE students. BE students, apparently, are less convinced that current or potential employers will recognize and reward their newly acquired skills.

Students' Goals, Achievements, and Continuing Participation

A range of factors led adults to enroll in literacy programs.

- Seventy-five percent of the students participating in BE programs hoped to improve their academic skills and credentials when they began their program.
- Goals of BE students included the acquisition of the GED (31%), better job performance or a new job (40%), and more generally, "a better life" and/or to "better themselves" (18%).
- Seventy-seven percent of the ESOL students attended programs to improve their ability to speak English; 29% hoped to improve their employment situations by the time they left the program; educational achievements such as acquiring the GED or a college diploma were also important goals of some ESOL students.
- In the BE sample, more than one-third of the students reported that they saw a change in their life and that they were satisfied or very satisfied with their program.

- The ESOL students also said they were satisfied or very satisfied with their programs and believed they were making progress toward their goals.

- Thirty-eight percent of the BE students and 36% of the ESOL students said they would go to another program or return to their current one if they had to leave for some reason.

- More than one-quarter of the total sample population expressed a desire to continue their education after leaving their program.

It is interesting to note that a higher proportion of BE students seek academic credentials such as the GED and a college diploma than do ESOL students. ESOL students may have already attained a higher level of education in their native country or realize that they cannot consider this option until they are able to speak English proficiently.

It may be that retention rates are tied to whether students view their progress as enabling them to meet their goal of improving their skills.

Issues for Researchers and Policymakers

Based on the findings of the first phase of this investigation as well as the experiences of the LAC, issues for further research and discussion are illuminated below.

Program Services

- Program managers, funders, policymakers and instructors may need to address the instructional consequences of a basic education classroom where a substantial portion of the students are not fully fluent in English.

- While math instruction is provided as part of the BE curriculum, there is a need to consider whether sufficient attention is being paid to the development of these skills.

- Many students are unaware of the non-literacy services that are available in this program. Program staff need to inform students of the existence of this aid. Space is not always available to meet the needs of all students who may require such services. There may be a need for additional services for the adult literacy population and funding for these services should be incorporated into literacy program budgets.

Recruitment and Retention

- Programs that are able to meet the needs of their students and facilitate their participation have a greater chance of recruiting and retaining students.

- No recruitment effort can be meaningful unless there are places available for students when they are ready to enroll.

- Effective recruitment efforts must be complemented by appropriate instructional and non-instructional services that are readily available when needed. In planning and program design it is important to address the needs of the population already being served. In addition, it is important to determine how to attract those students in need of services who are not attending programs in the numbers expected.

Family Literacy

- The results from this study suggest that the association of literacy skills of family members with abilities of students is not obvious and cannot be easily measured. The overwhelming majority of students came from homes where there were reading materials and more than one-half were read to as children. These students seem to be part of families whose members have varying levels of literacy and in fact, the majority of program participants received some amount of high school education but left without the requisite literacy skills.

Goals and Achievement

- It appears that those students who are flexible in adjusting their goals through a realistic assessment of their abilities and timeline for attainment of their goals are more likely to continue their studies.

- The fact that a large number of students cite less tangible achievements, such as increased self-confidence and a better life, suggests that additional ways to assess progress beyond standardized tests should be developed and employed by programs and funders.

Employment

- Programs need to address the future employment aims expressed by these students as well as the needs of students who are currently seeking employment or improvements in their work. Students who are delaying their job search may need assistance in developing and utilizing their skills to obtain a position when the appropriate time arrives.

- Despite the fact that these individuals have low literacy or English speaking skills, they are functioning in their workplaces; the impact of newly acquired literacy and English skills on employment requires further research.

- Programs need to work with students and, perhaps, with employers to enable students to apply their skills more effectively and to ensure that the new capabilities students have gained are recognized and rewarded.

A more complete description of the study, the findings, discussion of the findings, and implications for program mangers, practitioners, and policy makers is presented in the text of the full report of this phase of the study.

INTRODUCTION

During program year 1987-1988 the first phase of a longitudinal study of adult literacy students was undertaken. The aim of the study is to increase our understanding of the factors which encourage adults to enter and remain in programs and of the effects of program participation on adults' lives. The first phase of the project was designed to obtain information about students' educational and family backgrounds, employment histories, and reasons for attending programs. Preliminary information on these adults' achievements and changes in their lives since entering literacy programs was also collected during the initial phase of the study; follow-up interviews will provide further information on students who remain in or leave programs. This report details a number of the most important findings from the first phase of this longitudinal study.

Background

For several years, the Office of the Mayor and the New York State Education Department have sponsored research projects concerning adult literacy students and programs in New York City. These projects have been designed and carried out by the Literacy Assistance Center, Inc. (LAC) with the assistance of other researchers (See LAC Publications, in Appendix C). The first phase of the longitudinal study described here was conducted in collaboration with Metis Associates, an independent research agency.

A major aspect of this research plan has been the creation of a citywide data base which contains information about demographic characteristics of the students enrolled in State- and City-funded programs in New York City; their participation in these programs (e.g., type of instruction, hours attended); and selected outcomes, including standardized test results. In addition, information about literacy programs attended by these students is collected. The data base is the most comprehensive set of information on adult literacy students in the nation.

Findings from the data base have been disseminated to a broad group of adult literacy practitioners, researchers, and policy makers. The process of discussion of the data base analyses

with the adult literacy community has led to the identification of new areas for research which require different methods of investigation.

The need to understand more about the lives of students in Basic Education (BE) and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) programs has become evident. Students' participation and success in literacy programs is thought to be related to their past educational and family experiences, as well as their current personal and employment situations. Greater awareness of the reasons students seek adult literacy programs, the factors which encourage them to attend regularly, and the circumstances which cause them to leave programs is needed. Related to this is the need to better understand both students' and programs' accomplishments. Students' sense of achievement and feelings of satisfaction with their programs may be determined not only by conventional measures (e.g., standardized test scores) but also by the goals students set for themselves and by unanticipated positive and negative experiences in the programs.

Longitudinal Research Project

To address these issues, a number of research initiatives are being undertaken. The longitudinal research project reported on here is one major part of this effort. The first phase of this research, carried out in 1987, involved the collection of data from a representative sample of adult literacy students and programs. The findings from this phase of the investigation are described in the body of this report. The second phase of research, currently underway, includes a follow-up survey with the same student respondents to gather information on their experiences and the impact of program participation on their lives one year later. During the third phase of the research, in 1989, it is anticipated that students will be interviewed briefly by telephone to maintain contact for the fourth phase when another study will assess the long-term effects of participation in adult literacy programs.

Study Questions for the First Phase of Research

The goals of the first stage of research were as follows:

(i) To describe the significant demographic characteristics of adult students in Basic Education and English for Speakers of Other Languages programs.

(ii) To gain knowledge of the educational and family literacy backgrounds of the students.

(iii) To learn about the students' past and present participation in the labor force and public assistance programs as well as their employment aspirations.

(iv) To describe the desires and needs which motivate students to attend programs.

(v) To determine the types of accomplishments and level of satisfaction students experience in their programs.

Summary of Methodology

Students and program managers at 38 adult literacy program sites provided information through individual questionnaires during the program year 1987-1988. (See Appendix A for a full description of the methodology.) A stratified sample of 70 classes was selected using such characteristics as type of literacy provider agency (LPA)[3], instructional type (i.e., Basic Education, English for Speakers of Other Languages), program size, day/evening classes, and geographic location as criteria for selection.

Since each program is unique, serving its own neighborhood or perhaps a specific population (e.g., youth), selection of a perfect cross-section of New York City's diverse student population was not possible. However, a comparison of the sample population with the general adult literacy population found that the resultant sample was, in fact, representative of the overall adult literacy population. (See Appendix B for a full discussion of sample representativeness.)

---

[3] The literacy provider agencies in New York City are the Board of Education, the City University of New York, the Community Development Agency which oversees literacy programs at community-based organizations, and the three public library systems.

Questionnaires for students and program managers were developed by the Literacy Assistance Center in collaboration with Metis Associates and representatives from the adult education field.[4] The questionnaire used for the student interviews also drew upon information obtained from an earlier study of a smaller sample of adult Basic Education students conducted by M. Trika Smith-Burke for the Literacy Assistance Center (Starting Over: Characteristics of Adult Literacy Learners, 1987). The student questionnaire was translated into Spanish, Haitian/Creole and Chinese to allow for the collection of data from students who are not fluent in English.

Interviews were conducted with 663 students during the Spring of 1988. Of this total, 55% were conducted in English, 25% in Spanish, 13% in Haitian Creole, and 6% in Chinese. In addition, 1% of the interviews were conducted in another language (Polish, Italian, French, or Portuguese), with the questions being translated as the interview proceeded. As part of the interview, students were asked to provide information for the anticipated follow-up studies. Names, addresses and telephone numbers were requested so that students could be reached in the future. Of the students interviewed, over 95% provided such information.

Twenty-seven program managers were mailed a questionnaire to provide data about the programs and their services. They included five regional coordinators of the selected Board of Education sites; four managers of the selected CUNY sites; twelve managers of the sampled community-based organizations; and six managers of other community-based organizations whose sites serve as host locations for Board of Education classes. Twenty-five of the 27 program managers returned completed survey forms.

---

[4]The study instruments are available upon request from the Literacy Assistance Center.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROGRAMS

Program Services

Literacy Services

The programs which participated in this survey are located in the boroughs of Manhattan, Queens, Brooklyn, and the Bronx.[5] Most offer both Basic Education (BE) and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) courses as well as a range of other services such as preparation for the GED, basic education in the native language (BENL), and vocational training.[6] Both program managers and students were asked about the services available at the programs so that information from the two sources could be compared. Program managers were asked about recruitment of students; students, in turn were asked about their experiences in finding and enrolling in programs.

The overwhelming majority of programs offer both BE and ESOL services at a range of levels.

Table 1:
Instructional Services Offered by Programs*

n = 25

	n	% of respondents
BE	20	80.0
ESOL	22	88.0
BENL	4	16.0
Math	7	28.0
GED	16	64.0
Vocational Ed	6	24.0

* Multiple responses

[5] Less than 2% of all New York City adult literacy students reside in Staten Island and less than 1% attend programs in that borough.

[6] Most programs do not offer math as a separate instructional service. However, math is a requirement for program instruction as detailed in the request for proposals for programs funded under the New York City Adult Literacy Initiative. Most programs include a math component in their BE classes.

Table 2:
BE Levels Offered*
n = 20

	n	% of respondents
0.0-2.9	18	90.0
3.0-4.9	20	100.0
5.0-6.9	18	90.0
7.0-8.9	16	80.0

* Multiple responses

Table 3:
ESOL Levels Offered*
n = 22

	n	% of respondents
Level I	22	100.0
Level II	22	100.0
Level III	17	77.3
Level IV	12	54.5

* Multiple responses

Eighty percent of the programs offer Basic Education instruction, and most programs provide these services at all four levels: all BE programs offer level 3.0-4.9; 90% offer levels 0.0-2.9 and 5.0-6.9; and 80% offer instruction at the 7.0-8.9 level. Close to 90% of the programs surveyed provide ESOL services. All ESOL programs offer instruction at Levels I and II, and more than three-quarters of them offer Level III. However, only 55% offer Level IV instruction. All of the programs surveyed provide these services in class settings. In addition, more than one-half of these programs reported that they teach in small groups of two to five students. Nearly one-half also have said they have lab instruction while over one-third reported that they provide tutorial services.

Non-Literacy Services

In addition to various types and levels of instruction, programs offer a wide range of non-literacy services. Almost all of the programs offer general counseling services and some type of job

service. In addition, over one-fourth of the programs provide child care and one-fourth offer citizenship education. Most of these services are offered for a substantial amount of time each week during the day and evening. Typically, services are offered on the program site itself.

Table 4:
Non-Instructional Services Offered By Programs*
n=25

	n	% of programs
General Counseling	23	92.0
Job Counseling	15	60.0
Job Placement	10	40.0
Job Referral	9	36.0
Job Training	8	32.0
Citizenship Education	7	28.0
Child Care	7	28.0
Other Services	5	20.0
Legal Aid	2	8.0

* Multiple responses

Despite the range of services mentioned by program managers, the students' perceptions of the supplemental services available to them are often very different. For example, only 25% of the students who attended programs which offer child care were aware of the fact that this service was available. Although most programs offer counseling services, only one-third of the students at these programs reported that counseling was part of their program. A similar situation exists with regard to the various job services: roughly one-third of the students who attend programs in agencies that offer job placement, job training, job referral or job counseling knew that such services were provided by their program.

Discussion

Of significance is the fact that only 55% of the programs which offer ESOL services provide instruction at Level IV. Students who become proficient in English beyond Level III may not be able to find an ESOL Level IV class. Whether the number and type of ESOL classes provided by programs citywide is adequate to meet the needs of advanced second language learners should be

explored further. It may be that students seeking additional training in English attend BE classes which are not appropriate to their specific needs.

One reason for the discrepancy between students' and program managers' responses regarding the availability of non-literacy services may be that program managers reported services offered by the parent or umbrella agency where the literacy program is located, while students may be unaware of services that are offered outside of the literacy program itself. If these services are, in fact, available to the literacy students, programs need to inform students that such services exist and encourage their utilization. If they are not, policymakers should explore the need for such services with program managers and, if needed, develop ways to increase their availability.

Recruitment and Enrollment

Programs employ a variety of methods to recruit students. Flyers, posters and word-of-mouth are the most popular methods reported by program managers. In general, recruitment is carried out within a small geographic area contiguous to the program. However, over one-third of the programs also use advertisements and the mass media to attract students.

Students said they learned about programs through informal social networks. Most students were told about their programs by family members or friends. Students also found their programs through a range of social service and educational institutions and mass media sources.

Table 5:
Means by Which Students Found Out About Programs

	BE		ESOL	
	n	%	n	%
Family, friends	112	42.4	319	79.8
Social service agency	40	15.2	25	6.3
Printed ads	16	6.1	18	4.5
Neighborhood referrals	10	3.8	12	3.0
TV or radio	37	14.0	6	1.5
Education system	38	14.4	7	1.8
Other	11	4.0	13	3.1
Total Responses	264	100.0	400	100.0

Over two-thirds of BE and ESOL students sought enrollment in programs immediately after deciding to attend. Of the 81 BE students who did not attempt to enroll immediately, 11 said they needed time to find an appropriate program, while nine reported that the program schedule conflicted with their work schedule. Sometimes students waited to enroll because the "class was full," "the school did not follow up," and/or "the class was not in session." Twenty-six BE students mentioned that procrastination and/or embarrassment caused them to wait. One student said, "I waited about two months before enrolling, because I had a little uncomfortability about it. I never really liked school. I had to get used to the idea."

Approximately one-third of the ESOL students waited to enroll in their program. Twenty-eight students provided reasons which were program-related (e.g., the class was full or the class was not in session). Seventeen students needed time to find an appropriate program; 15 had child care difficulties; and 15 found that the program schedule conflicted with their work schedule. Fourteen ESOL students said they delayed enrolling because of procrastination or embarrassment.

Having taken the initial step of signing up for a program, over 40% of both BE and ESOL students reported having to wait until instruction began. For both BE and ESOL students, approximately 45% of those who had to wait did so for one month or less while another 17% waited for two months. Seventeen percent of the BE students and 22% of the ESOL students waited over five months from the date of application before beginning their instruction. On the average, students had to wait three and one-half months to begin their studies after applying.[7]

While the students interviewed had negative feelings about waiting for their programs to start, this did not significantly affect the degree of satisfaction they reported feeling after beginning their programs. However, the impact of such delays on students' participation and retention in the programs needs to be explored further. Over 30% of this group of students were willing to wait and eventually began an adult literacy program. However, little information exists on the students

---

[7] Some of the reasons given for waiting to enroll, such as the class being full or a schedule conflict, suggest that some contact with a program had been made by the student, in contrast to students who were looking for a program or who were embarrassed to enroll. Respondents may have differed in their definitions of enrollment, nevertheless, the fact that a delay often occurs is significant.

who become discouraged at this point in the process and give up before they have a chance to begin studying. Current research at the LAC on access to literacy programs will provide some information about this important question.

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE STUDENT POPULATION

The backgrounds of students served by New York City's BE and ESOL programs are highly diverse. Students in ESOL programs may have arrived recently while others have lived in New York City for many years. Some Basic Education students were born in New York, others came here from parts of the United States, or from other countries. Students in adult education programs are men and women of all ages. Some are employed or looking for work, while others are retired. Their family and educational backgrounds vary. An appreciation of the many types of individuals attending BE and ESOL programs can assist program designers in effectively targeting services.

Some of the basic demographic information (i.e., age, gender and ethnicity) about the students who participated in this longitudinal study comes from the citywide data base.[8] Information about students' birthplaces and native languages was collected during the interview. Because the latter information is not routinely gathered citywide, this is the first opportunity researchers have had to gain this knowledge for such a large segment of this population.

Age and Gender

The patterns of participation for women and men are similar for both types of programs. In the BE programs, 63% of the students who participated in this study were female while 37% were male; in the ESOL programs 64% of the students were female while 36% were male. The age distribution of male and female students is also similar for BE and ESOL students. The majority of students are between 25 and 44 years of age.

[8]Due to difficulties in matching identification numbers, the number of students for whom data base information was available was 527. Table totals may be less due to missing information in particular data elements.

Table 6:
Age Distribution by Gender*

Basic Education

Age in Years	Men		Women	
	n	%	n	%
20 or less	3	3.8	8	6.0
21-24	13	16.7	14	10.4
25-44	46	59.0	89	66.4
45-59	15	19.2	21	15.7
60+	1	1.3	2	1.5
Total	78	100.0	134	100.0

*Based on Data Base

Table 7:
Age Distribution by Gender*

ESOL

Age in years	Men		Women	
	n	%	n	%
20 or less	5	5.0	4	2.3
21-24	12	12.0	18	10.3
25-44	60	60.0	120	69.0
45-59	21	22.0	26	14.9
60+	2	2.0	6	3.5
Total	100	100.0	174	100.0

*Based on Data Base

Ethnicity, Nationality, and Native Language

Basic Education Students

The BE programs serve students who were born in the United States as well as students born abroad. Among the BE students interviewed, just over one-half were born in the United States. Over two-thirds of these individuals were born in the New York metropolitan area. Among the remaining one-third of BE participants born in the U.S., most came from the Southeast region.

Table 8:

Birthplace of BE Students

Birthplace	n	%
New York City - metro area	89	34.6
Other U.S. regions	42	16.3
Puerto Rico	24	9.3
Caribbean	62	24.0
Latin America	23	8.9
Asia	4	1.5
Middle East, Africa, Europe and other	14	5.4
Total	258	100.0

Close to 10% of the BE students interviewed came from the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico and over 24% were born in other areas of the Caribbean. Nearly 9% of the BE students came from Latin America, while the others were from various countries in Asia, the Middle East, Africa and Europe.

The ethnic background of BE students interviewed (U.S. and other nationalities combined) is shown in Table 9. The majority of students in the BE sample population are Black (51.8%). Hispanics represent the second largest group in the study (35.6%). White students constitute 9% of the BE group and Asian students represent approximately 2% of the sample.

Table 9:

Ethnicity*

Basic Education

	n	%
Black	115	51.8
Hispanic	79	35.6
White	20	9.0
Asian	5	2.3
Missing	3	1.3
Total	222	100.0

* Based on Data Base

For BE students who did not grow up in New York City, the year of arrival varied. The percentage of students who came to the metropolitan area since 1980 is only slightly greater than the percentages of students arriving in the earlier decades.

Table 10:
Year of Arrival in New York City

Basic Education

	n	%
Prior to 1960	31	21.7
1961-1970	32	22.4
1971-1980	36	25.2
1981-1988	44	30.7
Total Reported	143	100.0

All students interviewed were asked what language they spoke at home as a child. Nearly 37% of the students in BE programs spoke a language other than English as children. Of these, over 70% spoke Spanish.

ESOL Students

As one would expect, almost all of the ESOL students were born outside of the fifty states.

Table 11:
Birthplace of ESOL Students

Birthplace	n	%
Caribbean	169	41.9
Latin America	108	26.8
Asia	70	17.4
Middle East, Africa, Europe and other	14	3.5
New York City - metro area	2	0.5
Other U.S. regions	1	0.2
Puerto Rico	39	9.7
Total	403	100.0

Over 40% of the ESOL students interviewed were born in the Caribbean (excluding Puerto Rico). Over one-fourth of the students came from Latin America, while a substantial portion were from

Asia (17.4%). Almost 10% of ESOL students came from Puerto Rico and less than 5% were from Europe, the Middle East, or Africa. The most frequently mentioned birthplaces were Haiti (102), the Dominican Republic (67), Puerto Rico (39), People's Republic of China (38), Colombia (32), and Ecuador (27).

Table 12:
Year of Arrival in New York City

ESOL

	n	%
Prior to 1960	4	1.9
1961-1970	29	13.9
1971-1980	38	18.3
1981-1983	24	11.5
1984-1986	66	31.7
1987-1988	47	22.7
Total Reported	208	100.0

Almost two-thirds of the ESOL students arrived in New York City after 1980, and nearly one-fourth came to the City within the past two years.

Table 13:
Ethnicity*

ESOL

	n	%
Black	70	23.0
Asian	61	20.0
Hispanic	162	53.1
White	10	3.3
Missing	2	0.6
	305	100.0

* Based on Data Base

In the ESOL sample population the majority of students are Hispanic (53.1%). Twenty percent of the students are Asian, while 23% are Black. Whites made up 3% of the ESOL group.

Table 14:

Languages Spoken by ESOL Students

Language	n	%
Spanish	214	53.4
Haitian/Creole	86	21.4
Chinese	51	12.7
Others	50	12.5
Total	401	100.0

Over one-half of the ESOL students interviewed reported Spanish as their native language. Haitian Creole was the second most commonly spoken language (21.4%), followed by Chinese (12.7%). The remaining 12% of ESOL students spoke many languages and dialects, each representing less than five percent of the total ESOL sample population.

Discussion

New York City's BE as well as ESOL programs must be prepared to serve a very diverse population with regard to age and cultural background. The designers of recruitment strategies, curriculum and program services need to be cognizant of the different types of communities and groups they serve and plan their programs appropriately.

It is crucial to analyze further the phenomenon of a population in which close to two-thirds of the students are women. On the one hand, programs must be prepared to address women's needs and concerns. Services such as child care will make regular attendance easier for many women participants. Instruction which assists women to meet their specific goals, whether these relate to helping their children or to entering the job market, is also essential. At the same time, program managers, policy makers and researchers need to consider why men are a smaller proportion of the adult literacy population, and how men in need of services can be recruited and served in literacy programs.

Of great importance is the finding that many students served by BE programs may not be native speakers of English. Over one-third of the BE students interviewed spoke another language

at home when they were young. Fluency in English was not examined in this study; therefore, it is not possible to say what proportion of these students might have difficulty understanding or expressing themselves in an English language BE class. Whether the educational needs of students who are not fluent speakers of English are being met appropriately through participation in BE classes is an issue which needs to be explored. A related issue is the possible impact of participation by students whose English proficiency is limited, on a program's ability to serve other students who are fluent in English and who require instruction solely in literacy skills.

Are students who are not proficient in speaking English attending BE classes because of an insufficient number of free advanced ESOL courses or because the needs of those who have completed ESOL Level III are better met in BE classes? How does the mix of students who learned English recently with those whose native language is English affect learning and participation in programs? Does the relatively low percentage of U.S. born students imply that these adults are not coming to these programs in spite of their need for services? The Literacy Assistance Center is now conducting a study on access to programs which may clarify and help address this issue.

FAMILY LITERACY AND EDUCATION

The reading and writing skills of family members and the availability and use of reading materials in an individual's home as a child have been thought to be related to levels of literacy as an adult. Study participants were asked about the educational background and reading skills of their families as well as about their own educational experiences.

Family Literacy Backgrounds

Basic Education Students

Among BE students who were raised by one or both parents, 30% reported that their fathers read poorly or not at all, and 22% had mothers who could not read or read poorly. On the other hand, 36% of the respondents reported that their fathers read well in English and 40% said their mothers read well in English; an additional 10% of the fathers read well in another language, as did 9% of the mothers. Interestingly, almost 60% of the fathers and over 60% of the mothers who raised the BE students interviewed for this study had completed high school or gone beyond high school in their education.

Nearly 85% of the BE students reported having books in their homes when they were growing up. In addition, more than one-fourth of the BE students had magazines and/or newspapers.

More than 50% of the BE students said someone read to them when they were children. Of these, almost half (49%) were read to by their mother. Fathers of BE students also read to their children, as reported by 17% of the respondents.

Table 15:

Reading Materials in Students' Homes While Growing Up*

Basic Education

n = 212

	n	% of respondents
Books	180	84.9
Magazines	57	26.9
Newspapers	60	28.3
Comic Books	32	15.1
Religious material	39	18.4
Encyclopedia	42	19.8
Letters, bills	16	7.5
Other	27	12.7

* Multiple responses

In terms of their current households, nearly 24% of the BE students reported that another household member has difficulty reading and writing. This individual is most likely to be a child (35%), a sibling (26%), or a spouse (18%). In contrast, nearly 80% of the BE students reported having a household member whose reading and writing skills are good. In this case, the individual is likely to be a sibling (35%), a child (34%), a spouse (19%), or a parent (16%).

ESOL Students

Among ESOL students, 40% reported that their fathers read well in their native language and, interestingly, an additional 7% said their fathers read well in English. On the other hand, 15% reported that their fathers could not read. The mothers of ESOL students were slightly less likely to be literate than were their fathers: 36% read well in their native language; less than 7% read well in English; and 18% could not read. A substantial portion, 40%, of the mothers or fathers of ESOL students completed high school or studied beyond high school.

Ninety percent of the ESOL students said they had books in their homes when they were growing up. In addition, more than one-third of the ESOL students had magazines and/or

newspapers. Almost 60% of the ESOL students said that someone read to them when they were children. Mothers read to over 40% of the ESOL students, and almost one-third of the students' fathers read to them.

Table 16:

Reading Materials in Students' Homes While Growing Up*

ESOL

n = 335

	n	% of respondents
Books	302	90.1
Magazines	102	30.4
Newspapers	106	31.6
Comic Books	44	13.1
Religious material	40	11.9
Encyclopedia	22	6.6
Letters, bills	22	6.6
Other	19	5.7

* Multiple responses

At home presently, 34% of the students said that another household member has difficulty reading and writing. Most often the individuals with difficulties are spouses (31%), siblings (28%), a parent (23%) or a child (11%). Approximately 68% of the ESOL students have family members who read and write well. These persons are often siblings (39%), children (29%), spouses (25%) or a parent (13%).

These data on ESOL households must be interpreted with caution, as the language in which household members would have been reading and writing was not specified. That is, some respondents may have answered in reference to native language literacy ability while others referred to ability to read and write in English.

Educational History

Basic Education Students

Despite a need to improve their skills in reading and writing, many BE students have had a substantial amount of formal education. More than one-half of the BE students attended high school. In returning to an adult literacy program they hope to begin where they left off. One student told the interviewer, "I wanted to learn vocabulary, English, to know more things like American history, (this program) refreshes your brain, what you have on there already." In contrast, 12% of the BE students attended school for less than six years. Just over 20% attended schools which had educational levels which differ from U.S. standard categories; these were categorized as "other," and cannot be analyzed without further investigation.

Table 17:
Students' School Attendance

Basic Education

	n	%
Elementary	29	11.6
JHS	35	14.1
HS	125	50.2
College	6	2.4
Other	54	21.7
Total	249	100.0

Fifty percent of the BE students attended elementary school in the New York City metropolitan area, and an additional 11% attended elementary school elsewhere in the U.S. A small percentage of BE students (3.2%), attended elementary school in Puerto Rico. Twenty-two percent of students in the BE group attended elementary school in the Caribbean region (excluding Puerto Rico) while a small number attended elementary school in Latin America (7.9%), or Asia (1.6%).

Table 18:

Location of Elementary School

Basic Education

	n	%
NYC metro	124	49.0
Other U.S.	28	11.1
Puerto Rico	8	3.2
Caribbean	56	22.1
Latin America	20	7.9
Asia	4	1.6
Other	9	3.6
Do not know	4	1.6
Total	253	100.0

Table 19:

Location of High School

Basic Education

	n	%
NYC metro	110	62.9
Other U.S.	13	7.4
Puerto Rico	4	3.2
Caribbean	25	14.3
Latin America	12	6.9
Asia	2	1.1
Other	6	3.4
Do not know	3	1.7
Total	175	100.0

Of the BE students who attended high school, almost 63% attended school in the New York City metropolitan area and 7% attended schools in other parts of the United States. Over 14% attended school in the Caribbean (excluding Puerto Rico), 7% in Latin America, and 3% in Puerto Rico. This pattern is similar to that of the location of elementary schools. The large proportion of students attending high school in New York is not surprising, as many of these adults may have migrated during adolescence.

Analysis of the ages at which students left school may provide insights as to why BE students did not graduate. More than one-half of these students left when they were between 15 and 17

years old. One-fifth of the BE students left school between the ages of 12 and 14 while an additional one-fifth completed their last year of school between 18 and 20 years of age.

Students left school before completion for many reasons. The most frequently cited were personal or family-related reasons; each was given by approximately one-third of the BE students. Personal reasons included moving, drug problems, and health. Included in the category of family reasons were pregnancy, family pressure, and marriage. Economic necessity also forced BE students to leave school. Over 15% of the students cited work as a cause for leaving school, while others mentioned financial problems, a related issue. Close to one-fourth of BE students said they left school for academic reasons, such as failing or simply being unhappy with school.

Table 20:
Reasons for Leaving School Prior to Completion*

Basic Education
n = 215

	n	% of respondents
Academic	50	23.3
Personal	71	33.0
Political	4	1.9
Family Problems	70	32.6
Financial	14	6.5
Work	36	16.7
Never attended	1	0.5
Other	11	5.1
Do not know	7	3.3

* Multiple responses

Of the adults who are now in BE programs, older students tend to have ended their formal schooling at an earlier age than have their younger counterparts. Interestingly, older students were more likely than younger students to give pregnancy or family problems as a reason for leaving. Older students were also more likely to have left because of work-related reasons. Younger students were more likely to have left because they "failed a subject" or because they moved.

ESOL Students

Analysis of ESOL students' educational backgrounds is limited by the fact that more than 50% of the students attended schools which could not be categorized into U.S. grade levels. The patterns of education among students who did report standard U.S. grade levels is discussed here.

Table 21:
Students' School Attendance

ESOL

	n	%
Elementary	25	6.6
JHS	17	4.5
HS	93	24.7
College	44	11.7
Other	198	52.5
Total	377	100.0

A significant number of ESOL students have had extensive formal education. Approximately 25% of the ESOL students attended high school, while nearly 12% went to college. Over 40% of the ESOL students attended elementary and high school in the Caribbean, (excluding Puerto Rico) nearly 10% were educated in Puerto Rico, 27% went to school in Latin America and 15% in Asia.

Table 22:
Location of Elementary School

ESOL

	n	%
NYC metro	2	0.5
Other U.S.	1	0.3
Puerto Rico	37	9.4
Caribbean	170	43.3
Latin America	107	27.2
Asia	60	15.3
Other	16	4.0
Do not know	--	--
Total	393	100.0

Table 23:
Location of High School

ESOL

	n	%
NYC metro	3	1.0
Other U.S.	1	0.3
Puerto Rico	15	5.3
Caribbean	133	47.3
Latin America	80	27.9
Asia	42	14.6
Other	2	3.8
Do not know	2	0.8
Total	281	100.0

Almost 50% of the ESOL students reported that they left school before graduation. Family problems and personal reasons were the most common responses given for leaving school among the ESOL students (35.2% and 32.6% respectively). Moving and health problems were among the personal reasons given. A number of ESOL students experienced family pressure to leave school, or gave marriage as a reason for leaving. It was very common for ESOL students to have left school to work (20.7%) or for financial reasons (17.1%). It is interesting to note that ESOL students rarely said they left school because of academic problems.

Table 24:

Reasons for Leaving School Prior to Completion*

ESOL

n = 193

	n	% of respondents
Academic	11	5.7
Personal	63	32.6
Political	7	3.6
Family Problems	68	35.2
Financial	33	17.1
Work	40	20.7
Never attended	1	0.5
Other	11	5.7
Do not know	3	1.6

* Multiple responses

Prior Participation in Adult Education

More than one-third of the BE students and almost one-fourth of the ESOL students have attended adult education programs in the past. In some instances, students reported having attended two or more programs prior to entering the one in which they were enrolled when interviewed.

Of the students who attended programs previously, the majority went to the same type of program they were attending at the time of the interview. Nearly one-half the BE students who attended a program previously had been in BE programs and over three-fourths of the ESOL students had received ESOL instruction previously. Close to one-third of the BE students' earlier program experience had been in GED or GED preparation courses.

Table 25:
Type of Previous Program*

	Basic Education n = 97		ESOL n = 83	
	n	% of respondents	n	% of respondents
GED	27	27.8	10	12.0
Job Training	10	10.3	6	7.2
ESOL	20	20.6	65	78.3
BE or BENL	47	48.5	5	6.0
GED prep	4	4.1	--	--
Tutor	1	1.0	--	--
Other	13	13.4	7	8.4
Do not know	--	--	3	3.6

* Multiple responses

About one-half of the ESOL students who previously attended programs did so within the preceding two years. BE students were more likely to have attended programs five or more years earlier; however, one-third had attended in the preceding two years. Twenty BE and 10 ESOL students attended programs in the 1970s and some students reported having attended programs as far back as 1953. Seventy percent of BE and ESOL students who attended programs previously stayed for six months or less.

ESOL and BE students tend to give different reasons for leaving their previous programs. For both groups, "finished course" was the major reason for leaving (22% BE; 25% ESOL). However, for BE students, "not learning what I wanted" (16%) and "discouraged" (12%) were important reasons as well. For ESOL students, reasons for leaving included "had to work" (13%), attendance problems (10%), and "program too far" (11%).

Discussion

It is notable that over one-fifth of the BE students who reported attending programs in the past had been in ESOL programs. This reflects the fact that students may complete ESOL Level IV yet do not read or write well enough to enter a GED class. They may be placed in a BE class to strengthen their skills. This pattern, and the relatively small number of high-level ESOL classes

reported by programs in this study, suggest that there is a need for free or affordable classes at higher ESOL levels so that places in BE classes are not inappropriately filled by ESOL students.

BE students are far more likely than ESOL students to report leaving a previous program because they were dissatisfied or discouraged. It is possible that BE students become discouraged more easily than ESOL students because of previous negative experiences with formal schooling, as reflected in some of the reasons given by BE students for leaving school in the first place. In addition, BE students frequently enter adult literacy programs with the goal of obtaining their GED. They may not realize or be willing to admit that their reading skills are too weak to accomplish this goal within a short time period. GED preparation classes require an 8th grade reading level and many of these students enter at much lower levels. Students may require assistance in setting reasonable goals and time frames, and in assessing their real achievements as they proceed in the program.

The fact that most students now attend school until they are 15 years or older suggests that low-level literacy skills, at least for younger students, are not so much the result of a lack of formal education but rather a failure to gain proficiency during the years that they attended school. This is also reflected in the reasons for originally leaving school reported by younger BE students: they were more likely to have "failed a subject" and less likely to have left for work or family reasons than were their older counterparts.

Regardless of the students' past experiences with school or reading and writing at home, the support for their current efforts by family members is a factor influencing their decision to participate in programs. The comments of students illustrate this point. One student told the interviewer, "My children, they're glad I'm in school. Since I'm into it they say I'm teacher's pet, that I'm a nerd. So that feels good." Another student said, "My daughter and my husband they very happy I'm going for my GED. They help me study. They ask me, you don't have no homework? You don't have to study? You don't have nothing the teacher send to do? They help me to go for it, to study."

EMPLOYMENT AND LITERACY

Employment and Public Assistance Status

Basic Education Students

Approximately one-half of the students in BE programs were employed at the time of the interview; of these students, nearly two-thirds worked full-time. Among the employed BE students over 40% worked in service occupations. Nearly one-fourth of BE students worked in clerical or sales occupations. The third major category of occupation among BE students was professional, technical, or managerial; 16% of the respondents described jobs in this category. A substantial number of these individuals work in health facilities.

Table 26:
Current Jobs Held by Students

Basic Education

	n	% of employed
Professional, technical, managerial	20	16.4
Clerical, sales	29	23.8
Service occupations	49	40.2
Agriculture, fish, forest	--	--
Processing	1	0.8
Machine trades	4	3.3
Benchwork	5	4.1
Structural work	9	7.4
Miscellaneous	5	4.0
Total	122	100.0

There was variation in the types of employment among age groups. BE students between the ages of 16 and 24 were likely to be employed in clerical and sales positions while older BE students tended to be working in service occupations.

More than 50% of the BE students had held their positions for less than two years. In contrast, there was a substantial percentage, close to 20% who had been in their current positions for more than six years.

Table 27:
Months Working in Current Job

Basic Education

	n	%
1-6 months	32	26.4
7-12 months	17	14.0
13-24 months	12	9.9
25-36 months	18	14.9
37-48 months	6	5.0
49-60 months	9	7.4
61-72 months	5	4.1
Over 72 months	22	18.3
Total	121	100.0

Patterns of employment involve mobility from one type of occupation to another as well as length of time in a particular job or the labor force itself. Therefore students were questioned about their previous work experiences and future employment aspirations. Usually students' previous jobs fell into the same broad categories as their current positions.

Table 28:
Previous Jobs Held by Students

Basic Education

	n	% of employed
Professional, technical, managerial	13	6.6
Clerical, sales	50	25.3
Service occupations	69	34.8
Agriculture, fish, forest	1	0.5
Processing	6	3.0
Machine trades	10	5.1
Benchwork	16	8.1
Structural work	18	9.1
Miscellaneous	15	7.6
Total	198	100.0

Of the BE students who had held jobs previously, more than one-third had worked in service occupations. An additional one-quarter had been employed in clerical or sales positions. Other occupations ranged from unskilled factory work to professional positions.

The pattern for the length of time which students spent in previous jobs was similar to the length of time spent in their current positions.

Table 29:
Months on Previous Job

Basic Education

	n	%
1-6 months	50	25.9
7-12 months	27	14.0
13-24 months	28	14.5
25-36 months	22	11.4
37-48 months	14	7.3
49-60 months	14	7.3
61-72 months	10	5.2
Over 72 months	28	14.5
Total	193	100.0

The job aspirations of BE students differed by age groups. Close to 80% of students aged 16 to 20, and over 60% of those aged 45 to 59, wish to become professionals, technicians or managers. Many of those between the ages of 21 and 44 share this goal, but an equal number (slightly more than 40%) would like a clerical or sales position.

Job aspirations are also related to students' current positions. BE students currently employed in service occupations, machine trades, benchwork and structural work hope to become clerical and sales employees. Clerical and sales workers, on the other hand, hope to become engineers, social workers, health professionals, and teachers.

In an effort to reach those adults most in need of services, guidelines for the New York City Adult Literacy Initiative require that at least half of the students served citywide be unemployed (whether seeking work or not) or receiving public assistance. In the sample of BE students, slightly over one-half were not working at the time of the interview. Of these students,

one-third were actively looking for work while two-thirds were not seeking jobs at the time of the interview.

Table 30:

Employment Status by Age

Basic Education

Age	Working	% of age cohort	Not Working	% of age cohort	Total
16-20	10	45.5	12	54.5	22
21-24	19	65.6	10	34.5	29
25-34	45	47.4	50	52.6	95
35-44	21	33.3	42	66.7	63
45-59	24	57.1	18	42.9	42
60+	2	50.0	2	50.0	4
Total Population	121	47.5	134	52.5	255

The age group with the highest unemployment rate was the 35 to 44 year old cohort; approximately two-thirds of the students in this subgroup were unemployed, and of these, only 28.6% were seeking work.

More than one-third of the BE students were receiving public assistance.[9] A very small number of students who reported receiving public assistance were employed; however, over one-quarter were looking for a job. One-third of the public assistance recipients had been receiving benefits for more than six years. On the other hand, 26% of the BE students who obtained benefits had done so for less than six months. Thirty-two BE students said that at some point in their lives they believed they were qualified to receive public assistance yet they refused these benefits, primarily because they did not want them. Finally, 34% of the BE students had a parent who received public assistance. In this group, the students between the ages of 16 and 34 years were most likely to be the children of public assistance recipients.

[9] In the context of this interview, public assistance was defined broadly as any form of government assistance or benefits, and students were not asked to specify the nature of the benefits they received. Thus, students who are classified as receiving public assistance may be recipients of food stamps, SSI, or any of a number of other types of government benefits. Interview questionnaires designed for the second phase of this study will provide more detailed information on public assistance categories and enable a finer examination of issues in relation to public assistance than is presented in this report.

ESOL Students

Almost 60% of the ESOL students interviewed were employed, the vast majority on a full-time basis. More than one-third of the ESOL students were working in service occupations at the time of the interview. The second most common type of work among ESOL students was benchwork. Twenty-two percent of the ESOL students said they perform assembly work; for instance, they produced goods in the textile industry. Nearly 13% of the ESOL respondents were cashiers, sales clerks, or held other types of clerical or sales positions.

Table 31:
Current Jobs Held by Students

ESOL

	n	%
Professional, technical, managerial	12	5.5
Clerical, sales	28	12.9
Service occupations	73	34.4
Agriculture, fish, forest	--	--
Processing	5	2.3
Machine trades	20	9.2
Benchwork	47	22.1
Structural work	11	5.1
Miscellaneous	16	7.6
Total	212	100.0

ESOL students tend to have held their current jobs for a short time; close to 75% had been in their current position two years or less. Given their recent entry into the New York labor market, a high percentage of ESOL students with brief experience in their jobs is to be expected.

Table 32:
Months Working in Current Job

ESOL

	n	%
1-6 months	61	28.9
7-12 months	38	18.0
13-24 months	58	27.5
25-36 months	13	6.2
37-48 months	12	5.7
49-60 months	6	2.8
61-72 months	3	1.4
Over 72 months	20	9.5
Total	211	100.0

As with the BE students, little movement across occupations was found when comparing previous employment with current jobs.

Table 33:
Previous Jobs Held by Students

ESOL

	n	%
Professional, technical, managerial	16	7.1
Clerical, sales	28	12.4
Service occupations	66	29.3
Agriculture, fish, forest	5	2.2
Processing	8	3.6
Machine trades	21	9.3
Benchwork	57	25.3
Structural work	11	4.9
Miscellaneous	13	5.9
Total	225	100.0

When asked about their future job aspirations, a substantial portion of the ESOL students, said they wished to become professionals, technicians, or managers. These job goals were most common among clerical and sales employees. In a pattern which is similar to the BE group, ESOL workers employed in service occupations, machine trades, benchwork, and structural work sought future employment in clerical and sales positions. Unlike the BE group, variation across age groups was not evident in the ESOL population.

Among the ESOL sample population, slightly more than 40% of the students were unemployed. Of these students, approximately 38% were looking for a job while nearly 62% were not seeking work at the time of the interview.

Table 34:
Employment Status by Age, ESOL

ESOL

Age	Working	% of age cohort	Not Working	% of age cohort	Total
16-20	13	56.5	10	43.5	23
21-24	26	70.3	11	29.7	37
25-34	79	68.7	36	31.3	115
35-44	54	51.4	51	48.6	105
45-59	39	58.2	28	41.8	67
60+	0	0.0	7	100.0	7
Total Population	211	59.6	143	40.4	354

Unemployment was most prevalent among ESOL students between the ages of 35 and 44 years; nearly 49% of the ESOL students in this cohort were not working. Only one-fourth of this subgroup were looking for jobs.

Less than one-fifth of the ESOL students reported that they receive public assistance. Of these students, nearly one-half had been receiving public assistance for six years or more. On the other hand, almost one-fifth of these students had received benefits for less than six months. There was no discernable pattern for parents of ESOL students regarding receipt of public assistance, perhaps because so many have recently come to the United States. Eighteen ESOL students said that at some point they believed they were eligible for public assistance but refused to accept it. Like the BE students, the primary reason given was that they did not want it.

Discussion

There are some clear distinctions between the employment patterns of BE and ESOL students. Employed BE students, about one-half of the total group of BE students interviewed, are most likely to be employed in service occupations, with fairly substantial numbers employed

in clerical and sales and, interestingly, professional, technical or managerial positions. Fully one-third of those employed work only part-time. ESOL students, on the other hand, are more likely to be employed and to be working full-time. Like their counterparts in BE programs, they are most likely to be working in service occupations, but unlike BE students, they are also likely to be doing benchwork and are very seldom employed in professional, technical or managerial jobs. Apparently, lack of English language skills represents a very substantial barrier to white collar employment.

While BE students in every age group (except the very small proportion of the population over 60) are more likely to be unemployed than are ESOL students, there are some similarities with regard to age and employment. Students aged 21-24 were most likely to be employed, and those aged 35-44 were most likely to be unemployed. In addition, most of the unemployed students in the 35-44 age group were not looking for employment. The high unemployment rate in the 35-44 year old group and the fact that the majority of this subgroup are not actively searching for work may be due to students being at home with children, either by choice or because of lack of child care.

Relevance of Literacy Skills to Employment

To understand in greater depth the impact of adult literacy programs on the job performance of students, information was sought about the specific types of reading and writing skills needed by students at their workplaces. Students were asked to assess their use of these basic skills in current as well as previous jobs. In this way, changes which may be attributable to participation in adult literacy programs could be explored.

Basic Education Students

Among BE students with prior work experience, nearly 58% reported that they had read as part of their earlier job responsibilities. Almost one-third said they had read instructions,

messages and/or notes while nearly one-fourth had read memos and letters. More than one-tenth had read names and addresses in prior jobs. While BE students generally felt they had read adequately on their previous job, it is significant that one-fifth felt they had not read very well.

Table 35:
How Well Read on Job?

Basic Education

	Previous Job		Current Job	
	n	%	n	%
Very well	49	43.4	39	39.4
Well enough	41	36.3	42	42.4
Not very well	23	20.3	18	18.2
Total	113	100.0	99	100.0

Employed BE students were asked whether they read on their current jobs, and nearly 80% said they did. Of these, over 80% reported that they read "very well" or "well enough" to do the reading tasks at their current jobs.

When comparing students' assessments of their reading skills in past jobs with assessments of their reading abilities in their present positions, it was found that the percentages of students who felt they read very well in their current position were similar to the responses pertaining to prior employment. However, a few BE students claimed they read better in their current positions.

Of the BE students who worked previously, nearly one-half said that some writing was part of their previous work. Most of these BE students had written messages or notes (61%), while more than 21% had written invoices or records. Nearly 18% of the respondents had written memos or letters. As with reading, more than three-fourths of the BE students felt they wrote very well or well enough in their previous jobs. However, they were more likely to say they did very well on reading tasks and only well enough on writing tasks. Thus students judge their writing skills on previous job less highly that their reading skills.

Table 36:
How Well Write on Job?

Basic Education

	Previous Job		Current Job	
	n	%	n	%
Very well	29	33.3	22	31.9
Well enough	37	42.5	37	53.6
Not very well	21	24.2	10	14.5
Total	87	100.0	69	100.0

More than 55% of the working BE students write in their present positions. Almost 60% of these respondents write messages and/or notes while nearly 30% write invoices and records. Memos and letters were another type of writing mentioned by more than 20% of the BE respondents. As with their assessments of how well they read in their current job, over 80% of the BE students felt they write very well or well enough to do their jobs.

Although BE students who do reading or writing tasks as part of their work feel they do so adequately, virtually all employed BE students felt that improving their reading and writing skills would help them to improve in their current job. In addition, 60% saw improved skills as a factor in obtaining a new job and close to one-half felt that such improvement would help them get a promotion.

Table 37:
Will Improving Reading and Writing:*

Basic Education

	n	% respondents
Help do better on job	116	94.3
Help get a promotion	57	47.1
Help get new job	74	60.2

*Multiple responses

54

ESOL Students

ESOL students' responses about reading and writing at work revealed a dramatically different pattern from that of BE students. Of the 212 employed ESOL students who responded to questions regarding reading and writing at work, only 43% said they read and 28% said they write as part of their job responsibilities. The question did not distinguish between reading and writing in English and in other languages; therefore, these responses need to be considered cautiously and the actual data has not been presented in tables here.

Among the ESOL students who reported that they read at work, nearly one-third said they read messages, notes, memos, and letters. Almost one-fourth read instructions while less than one-fifth read invoices and records. Among the ESOL students who write at work, more than 43% write notes and messages. Twenty-five percent of the ESOL employed students write invoices and records, while 11% write memos and letters. Of the ESOL students who reported that they read and write at work, over three-quarters said they do these tasks very well or well enough.

The overwhelming majority of ESOL students believe that improving their reading and writing skills will improve their work situations: over 90% stated that acquisition of these skills would allow them to change jobs; 85% felt they could do better at their current job; and over three-quarters felt their improved skills would help gain a promotion.

Table 38:
Will Improving Reading and Writing:*

ESOL

	n	% respondents
Help do better on job	185	85.6
Help get a promotion	164	26.3
Help get new job	201	93.1

*Multiple responses

Discussion

While both BE and ESOL students who read and/or write as part of their job report that they do so adequately, the proportion of each group who do such tasks is quite different. Close to 80% of BE students read and over one-half write as part of their job responsibilities, while for ESOL students these proportions are halved: just over 40% read and just over one-quarter write on the job. This probably reflects the differences in the types of occupations in which BE and ESOL students are employed, as noted earlier.

Fewer students reported that they wrote at work than that they read. This difference in use of basic skills may be due to the fact that it is easier to compensate for an inability to read: for this reason, low level readers may be comfortable accepting jobs which involve reading. In writing, one's lack of ability is more evident to employers and co-workers; therefore, students may avoid employment in which writing skills are needed. Furthermore, they may be more aware of their need to improve in this area than in reading, accounting for the differences in responses.

While students reported that their reading and writing skills were adequate for performing their current duties, almost all respondents also felt that they could improve on the job by strengthening their skills. ESOL students, however, were far more optimistic about the possibility of getting a promotion or a new job than were BE students. BE students, apparently, are less convinced that current or potential employers will recognize and reward their newly acquired skills.

STUDENTS' GOALS, ACHIEVEMENTS, AND CONTINUING PARTICIPATION

Adults enter BE and ESOL programs for a variety of reasons; often a number of factors come together at a particular time, leading an individual to take the step of enrolling. Students were asked about their initial reasons for attending their program, changes in their goals, their reasons for staying and why they might leave their program. They were also asked how they would know they had completed the program and what they planned to do after they finished. A very strong commitment to education underlies many of the responses described below.

Students' Goals, Achievements and Levels of Satisfaction

Basic Education Students

Close to three-quarters of the students participating in Basic Education programs hoped to improve their academic skills and credentials when they began their program. Over 40% of BE students said that better job performance or a new job was their reason for first attending their program. (Many students gave more than one reason.)

Among the specific educational goals mentioned by many BE students was the acquisition of the GED (31%). Others had more general educational objectives such as "improve reading," "move to the next level in the program," and "learn more in general."

Table 39:
Why Students Decide to Attend Adult Literacy Programs*

Basic Education

n = 256

	n	% respondents
Academic	190	73.9
Job/PA	104	40.5
Personal	66	25.7
Speak English	14	5.4
Child/Family	13	5.1
Opportunity	11	4.3
Life Skills	10	3.9
Other	09	3.5

*Multiple responses

Less specific goals, related to improving the quality of one's life, were also frequently noted as reasons for returning to school. Over 18% of the BE students said they returned to school "for a better life" and/or to "better themselves."

Table 40:
Reasons for Staying in the Program*

Basic Education

n = 258

	n	% respondents
Progress in program	72	28.3
Teacher	52	20.5
Self confidence	37	14.6
Learn more in general	28	11.0
Better my life	24	9.4
Family/friend support	23	9.1
Learn to read	22	8.7
GED	22	8.7
Relate to people	21	8.3
Other	68	26.8

* Multiple responses

The interaction of accomplishments, retention, and satisfaction was evident in the responses of adult literacy students. In the BE sample, more than one-third of the students reported that they saw a change in their life and that they were satisfied or very satisfied with their program, and more than one-fourth of those interviewed noted that the programs helped them to make personal changes. They were better able to fulfill responsibilities, to help their children and they felt more independent. Their sense of achievement encouraged them to remain in their programs. "I feel more happier because I like coming. I feel good 'cause you're doing something about my life." It was common for students to say that improved self-confidence (14.6%) and learning more in general (11.0%) motivated them to attend.

Among the BE students, most expressed the belief that they were improving. Even among those who felt they were doing poorly, the tendency was to say they were very satisfied or satisfied with their program. Despite the fact that some students felt they had not made progress at the time

of the interview or were dissatisfied with their program, these feelings did not necessarily discourage them from continuing.

There was also little difference in the expressed level of satisfaction for students who miss or are late for class and those who reported that they were not absent often. These responses suggest that many students who miss class or leave programs do so because of reasons unrelated to the programs. Overall, BE students were satisfied with their programs.

Table 41:
Satisfaction

Basic Education

	n	%
Very Satisfied	131	51.4
Satisfied	112	43.9
Not Very Satisfied	112	4.7
Total	255	100.0

ESOL Students

Not surprisingly, the primary reason students attended ESOL programs was to improve their ability to speak English; nearly 77% of the ESOL students held this goal. In addition, 29% hoped to improve their employment situations by the time they left the program. Educational achievements such as acquiring the GED or a college diploma were also important goals of ESOL students, although not as often as for BE students; many ESOL students have already achieved higher educational levels in their native countries. Knowledge of English was also viewed as a way to facilitate daily activities such as traveling by public transportation, speaking to others, and understanding U.S. society.

Table 42:
Why Students Decide to Attend Adult Literacy Programs*

ESOL

n = 350

	n	% respondents
Speak English	307	76.6
Job P/A	118	29.4
Academic	92	22.9
Personal	77	19.2
Life Skills	28	7.0
Child/Family	28	4.0
Opportunity	13	3.2
Other	6	1.5

* Multiple responses

Like the BE students, a substantial number of ESOL students noted positive personal changes in their lives since coming to their programs. Clearly, the process of learning English embodies many changes in the lives of ESOL students. Their on-going achievement in this area is felt in terms of employment, academics, and on a personal level and underlies their commitment to continued learning: progress in the program, learning English, and increased self-confidence are the most frequently cited reasons for staying in programs.

Table 43:
Reasons for Staying in the Program*

ESOL

n = 402

	n	% respondents
Learn English	117	29.6
Self confidence	77	19.5
Progress by program	53	13.4
Teacher	43	10.9
Better my life	38	9.6
Learn more in general	37	9.4
Family/friend support	25	6.3
Relate to people	21	5.3
Learn to read	5	1.3
GED	--	0.0
Other	70	17.7

* Multiple responses

Like their counterparts in the BE programs, the ESOL students said they were satisfied or very satisfied with their programs and believed they were making progress toward their goals. Other patterns found among the BE population held true for the ESOL students as well. Approximately 50% of ESOL students said they had experienced changes in their lives since coming to the program and that they were very satisfied with their class. When asked whether they had improved, 38% said they had. They were aware of their improvements because they were speaking English more often or better. "People say 'oh, you speak better, I understand...' Before when someone speak I say 'no' or 'OK' but now I speak out, I continue the conversation." A substantial number of ESOL students also felt more confident, which encouraged them to remain. The number of dissatisfied ESOL students was very small, less than 6%.

Table 44:
Satisfaction

ESOL

	n	%
Very Satisfied	205	50.9
Satisfied	175	43.4
Not Very Satisfied	23	5.7
Total	403	100.0

Students' Perceptions of Program Completion and Plans After Leaving

Students' concepts of program completion and their plans after leaving the program influence their patterns of participation.

Ninety-one percent of all BE students gave academic accomplishments as their measure of completion. Within this set of goals, the objective of 37% of the students was "to obtain a GED." Twenty-one percent of students said that the teacher would tell them when they were finished. A third measure of completion among BE students was the ability to read better; 12% of BE students gave this response when asked how they would know when they had completed their program.

Among ESOL students, academic accomplishments were also the most common response when students were asked how they would know they had completed the program. Sixty-one percent of ESOL students gave this type of answer. More than 25% thought they would be finished when they could "speak English." Sixteen percent of the ESOL students responded that they could determine when they had completed the program through self-evaluation.

ESOL students also said the teacher would tell them when their program was complete (18%). ESOL students were more likely to say they would be finished "when the course is over" than were BE students. Eleven percent of the ESOL students gave this response in comparison to 6% of the BE students.

More than one-quarter of the total sample population expressed a desire to continue their education after leaving their program. "I feel that I want to continue college maybe. It will take a few years but I'll get there."

Table 45:
Plans to Continue Education

	BE	%	ESOL	%
GED	24	17.0	10	5.3
College	52	36.9	37	19.4
Trade School	13	9.2	21	11.1
Continuing Education (Misc.)	52	36.9	122	64.2
Total	141	100.0	190	100.0

In a pattern similar to that found in these adults' reasons for deciding to attend programs, a higher proportion of BE students seek academic credentials such as the GED and college diplomas after completing their programs than do ESOL students. ESOL students may have already attained a higher level of education or realize that they cannot consider this option until they are able to speak English proficiently.

Students also said they would improve their employment or financial status after leaving the program. Future plans related to employment were analyzed in terms of students' current job status. Among the BE students currently employed, nearly 76% said they planned to change jobs after completing their program. The vast majority of unemployed BE students, including those not currently seeking work, said they would get a job after finishing their studies.

Table 46:
Employment Plans of BE Students by Current Employment Status

	Working	%	Looking for Work	%	Not in Labor Force	%
Get/change job	51	76.1	21	87.5	43	81.1
Job training	7	10.5	1	4.2	4	7.6
Misc. Job Goal	9	13.4	2	8.3	6	11.3
Total	67	100.0	24	100.0	53	100.0

In the ESOL group, 75% of the employed students said they would seek a new job after completing their program. Most ESOL students who were looking for work or not in the labor force at the time of the interview planned to obtain job training and/or work after leaving the program. It is interesting to note that in both the BE and ESOL groups, students who were already working plan to obtain further job training more often than do unemployed students.

Table 47:
Employment Plans of ESOL Students by Current Employment Status

	Working	%	Looking for Work	%	Not in Labor Force	%
Get/change job	57	75.0	28	90.3	42	91.3
Job training	6	7.9	2	6.5	1	2.2
Misc. Job Goal	13	17.1	1	3.2	3	6.5
Total	76	100.0	31	100.0	46	100.0

Reasons Students Might Leave their Current Programs

Although all the students interviewed were attending an adult education program at the time of the interview, they were asked to speculate about reasons they might leave their program. It is notable that a substantial number of both BE and ESOL students said that they would not leave; 18% of BE students and 13% of ESOL students responded in this way. Thirty-eight percent of the BE students and 36% of the ESOL students said they would go to another program or return if they left their current course. The most common reasons for possibly leaving a program were

related to work. Students also gave reasons related to parenting; for instance, respondents said they might leave if they were pregnant, had to take care of their children, or if they could not afford to pay for child care. Problems with the program were cited by relatively few students.

Discussion

Adult students come to programs for a number of reasons. The vast majority of students, however, view improvement in their skills, be it in reading, writing or English, or the continuance of their education in general, as their goal. The first three objectives are also cited by students as important means by which they can determine that they have completed the program. At the same time significant personal achievements were frequently mentioned when students were asked how the program has helped them, and why they have stayed in the program. Retention rates are probably tied to whether students view their progress as enabling them to meet their goal of improving their skills. Students' assessments of the effectiveness of programs in assisting them to meet their goals will be described in more detail in the report on the second phase of the longitudinal study which took place one year after the initial interviews reported upon here.

SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

Types of Instruction

Most of the literacy programs surveyed offered Basic Education (BE) instruction at all levels and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) instruction at Levels I through III. ESOL Level IV, Basic Education in the Native Language (BENL) and Math instruction as a separate subject, all of which are funded literacy services under the New York City Adult Literacy Initiative, are less commonly available.

Program managers and instructors must address the instructional consequences of a basic education classroom where a substantial portion of the students may not be fully fluent in English. Instructors need to be able to meet the needs of these students and at the same time address the needs of English-speaking students who require reading and writing instruction. Students who complete ESOL Level III may decide to enter a BE class because there are no places in ESOL IV available to them. They may require the opportunity to use their English language skills in natural settings rather than any sort of classroom instruction, be it ESOL IV or BE. Perhaps volunteers could be used to provide conversation for ESOL students within a program setting. Programs and funders may wish to consider other, alternative means of meeting these students' needs, which may in turn strengthen the services available for all students.

The reports by students who waited to enter programs, and the existence of waiting lists at many programs throughout the city, suggest that not only are the number of ESOL programs inadequate, but places in BE classes are being filled by students whose real need is for further English language instruction, while English-speaking students in need of literacy services are unable to find a class.

The relatively small number of programs which report offering separate math services does not reflect the actual amount of math instruction available to adult literacy students in New York. Math, along with reading and writing, is part of the BE curriculum for many programs. Indeed, the request for proposals (which details the requirements for programs funded under the Initiative) lists math as one of the areas in which instruction is to be provided in the BE classroom. Program

managers and funders may wish to consider whether sufficient attention is being paid to the development of math skills within the BE setting. There may be a need for staff development in this area, to ensure that teachers are familiar with the materials and techniques necessary for math instruction.

BENL instruction is offered by only a few programs, and is not typically incorporated into any other type of instruction. BENL instruction is aimed at students who are not native speakers of English and are not literate in their native language. Teaching basic literacy skills in the native language allows these adults to build upon their knowledge of their own language. ESOL instruction often depends on materials which assume literacy skills in the native language, skills which are then transferred to and utilized for English language learning. Students who do not have these skills are not best served in such a setting. An instructor who works at the same time with students who are able to read and write in their native language and with others who are unfamiliar with the alphabet and unskilled in using written materials faces a very difficult task. As in the BE classroom where some students are native English speakers and others are not, neither group may be getting the most appropriate instruction. The question which programs and funders must address is whether there are adequate services to meet the needs of non-native speakers who are not literate in their own language.

Non-Literacy Services

All the programs that participated in this study reported offering a wide range of non-instructional services. However, many students are unaware that these services are available. Some of the services may be offered by the umbrella agency, rather than the literacy program itself, or may be housed at the main agency site while the literacy classes are held at a satellite site. Even when services exist, space and resources are not always available to meet the needs of all students who may require such services.

From the perspective of a multi-service agency, the addition of a literacy component may strengthen the organization yet tax the non-instructional services that exist if new clients enter for the purpose of education. City and State funding provide the instructional hour costs for additional

classes and have recently increased funding for counseling, but still do not provide substantial financial support for an array of services. Research is needed to determine the types of supportive services which are appropriate for the adult literacy population, and funding for these services should be incorporated or other ways of providing these services (e.g., well-established linkage with existing providers) should receive more attention.

The availability and appropriateness of both instructional and non-literacy services has a direct impact on recruitment and retention. Programs that are able to meet the needs of their students and make it easy for them to attend have a greater chance of recruiting and retaining students.

Recruitment

Many more students report that they learned about their adult literacy program through their social networks such as family, friends or neighborhood referrals than by any other means. Recently, extensive resources have been put into a media ad campaign. Although this approach to recruitment has some impact, allocating funds into more targeted, community-level recruitment efforts might result in greater student participation.[10] Some suggestions provided by student participants in a concurrent LAC study on access to literacy programs included "each-one-bring-one", a literacy mobile (modeled on book mobiles), and leaving flyers at barber shops and child care agencies.

No recruitment effort, however, can be effective unless there are places available for students when they are ready to enroll. Approximately one-third of the students in this study had to wait an average of three and one-half months to begin their program. As a result, the population is comprised of students who have the determination to withstand delays. It may be that a large number of students who contact a program are discouraged by the long wait and give up. To better

---

[10] A concurrent LAC study on access to adult literacy programs found that although most students did not come to their program as a direct result of the media campaign, seeing the ads repeatedly kept the idea in their minds and made them realize they were not alone; and 15% of the students in this study reported learning about their program through TV and radio ads. Moreover, it is not clear whether the family and friends, who told students about the programs, first became cognizant of the availability of literacy services through the media.

serve the population in need of literacy services, not only must appropriate services be available but placement in programs should occur shortly after recruitment.

In planning recruitment strategies and program design, it is important both to address the needs of the population being served and to determine how to attract those students in need of services who are not attending programs in the numbers expected. For example, BE programs currently serve a large immigrant population, many of whom are non-native speakers of English. Programs which were designed to provide reading and writing instruction to an English-speaking population need to adapt to serve a more diverse population. At the same time, methods for attracting those English-speaking adults who are in need of services but are not entering programs must be developed.

In addition, both BE and ESOL programs currently serve a population which is close to two-thirds female. The reasons for lower participation on the part of males need to be examined. More effective recruitment efforts must be made and programs should be designed to address the needs of men beginning instruction as well as the needs of women.

Family Literacy

Adult learners are not easily categorized; each individual's characteristics and circumstances are so distinct that patterns are not readily discerned. Some research suggests that a person's literacy level is in part determined by whether one was reared in a literate household (defined by whether one was read to as a child and whether there were reading materials in the home). However, this study found that the overwhelming majority of students came from homes where there were reading materials and more than half of the students reported being read to as children. In addition, many students had parents who had attended high school. In fact, the percentage of parents without literacy skills in this study is not very different from the 20% often cited for the general population. These students seem to belong to families whose members have varying levels of literacy.

In fact, having someone in the family who is a good reader may be an important factor in enabling an adult with low literacy skills to function in day-to-day activities. Over 30% of the

students in this study report that there is someone who has good literacy skills in their household. Recent research and profiles of adult literacy students indicate the importance of a social network that includes a literate person to assist in coping with the literacy demands one encounters.

The fact that these students are now enrolled in literacy programs does not necessarily mean that they did not receive a formal education. Many of these students attended U.S. high schools but left without the requisite literacy skills. This indicates, as has been stated on many other occasions from various data sources, that the education system is not providing adequate education for all of its students.

The pattern of participation of students who have attended adult literacy programs in the past again underscores the importance of designing programs to meet the needs of students and the need to state clearly what is being offered at the time of recruitment and intake. In fact, students' goals and expectations upon entering a program and how well they are met are probably major factors in determining whether a student remains in a program. It appears that those students with realistic assessments of their abilities and a workable time-line for attainment of their goal (e.g., recognizing the need to first improve reading and writing, then seeking a GED) are more likely to continue their studies. The fact that a large number of students cite achievements such as increased self-confidence and a better life, suggests that additional ways of assessing progress (other than standardized tests) should be recognized by programs and funders.

A number of BE students had previously attended GED programs and a handful had attended a job training program in the past. It is likely that students switched to a BE class because their literacy skills were not adequate for a GED or job training program, both of which require a minimum eighth grade reading level. Naturally, students enroll in the programs which seem to meet their long term goals. Often they are not willing or able to determine the extent of their own literacy needs. Programs and recruitment efforts can define what is offered and to rapidly and appropriately match the course and student.

The same pattern does not emerge for ESOL students. Most ESOL students who had attended previously had attended another ESOL program. However, the number of BE students who were ESOL students in the past raises some important issues discussed earlier in this section.

Almost all the students interviewed for this study expressed satisfaction with their program. In fact, when asked for reasons why they might leave their program the most common response was "I wouldn't leave." Those that gave reasons for leaving mentioned situations that related to other aspects of their lives such as lack of child care or needing to work. A strong commitment on the part of funders and programs to provide adequate support services might help address these issues and make it easier for students to attend programs.

Employment

One long-term goal of literacy instruction is the improvement of students' employment situations. Acquisition of new or improved language and literacy skills is clearly relevant to obtaining a job, gaining a promotion, or moving to a new and more demanding type of occupation. Funders, literacy practitioners, the business community and the public at large are concerned with this aspect of literacy instruction, as are the students, many of whom enter programs with job-related goals. Whether or not improved employment is a student's specified goal, the majority of employed students, and some unemployed students as well, feel that improving their skills will assist them in one way or another in their employment. In considering the relationship between literacy instruction and employment, and how programs can address the needs of students in this area, it is necessary to look at the current employment situation of students, and at their aspirations and expectations.

One point which needs to be taken into consideration is the fact that the majority of unemployed students in this study reported that they were not currently looking for work. Overall, only about one-third of the unemployed students were seeking employment, and within the age cohort with the highest unemployment, those 35-44, the proportion seeking employment is closer to one-quarter. This pattern is the same for BE and ESOL students, despite the fact that ESOL students are substantially more likely to be employed than are BE students.

The reasons for adult students' not looking for employment is an area which requires further investigation. Students may have family and child-rearing responsibilities which take priority. Or they may be focusing on their education as a first priority, as a means to employment

at a later date. Programs need to address the employment aims of these students as well as those of students who are currently seeking employment or changes in employment. Students who are postponing their job search may nevertheless need assistance in developing and utilizing their skills to obtain a position at the appropriate time. On the other hand, if unemployment and the lack of efforts to seek employment are related to the state of the job market, and to a lack of jobs available for this population, programs and policy makers need to recognize that a much broader problem exists. Programs may want to adapt their job services to reflect the reality of the job market, and they may want to work with employers, unions or other organizations to advocate for training and employment opportunities for adults completing literacy programs. Certainly, improving students' skills for non-existent jobs is an exercise in frustration for all concerned.

The needs of employed students with regard to future employment must also be addressed by programs, and the issues are not dissimilar to those for unemployed students. Again, both the students' own goals and concerns and the realities of the job market will affect the need and value of services offered and may suggest directions for coordination and/or merging of job and literacy services. Indeed, the New York City Department of Employment has already taken steps toward mandating the merging of literacy instruction into its training programs, and at the same time literacy programs may wish to expand their job-related curricula.

This study significantly adds to our knowledge of the employment situations of adult literacy students, and thus to the understanding of these students' employment-related needs. It is most important to realize that BE and ESOL students are very different with regard to both their types of occupation and their literacy requirements, and to the students' perceptions of how their improved skills may impact upon their future employment. BE students are mainly working in service occupations, clerical or sales jobs, with a fairly substantial proportion (over 16%) in professional, technical or managerial positions. An overwhelming majority of employed BE students read as part of their job, and over one-half are required to do some writing on the job. ESOL students are much less likely than BE students to be working in the clerical or sales areas. Rather, they are likely to be doing benchwork. They are also much less likely to be required to read or write on the job than are BE students.

Almost all students who do read or write on the job feel that they do so well enough to meet the job requirements. On the other hand, employed students -- whether they are required to read and write on the job or not -- almost unanimously feel that improved reading and writing skills will help them do their jobs better. It is important for program staff and funders, as well as the concerned public, to realize that in spite of the fact that these individuals have low literacy or English speaking skills, they are functioning in their workplaces and are competent in other aspects of their lives. This is reflected in the kinds of employment students have, and the fact that over one-half have been working at their current job for more than a year. Nevertheless, these students do see the value of gaining new skills, and the possibility of doing better on their jobs.

One area in which BE and ESOL students are very different is their perception of the results of improved skills on their future job prospects. While almost all students agree that they could improve their current job performance, BE students are much less optimistic than ESOL students regarding the relevance of their new skills for getting a new job or, interestingly, for getting a promotion. That is, ESOL students feel they will do better on the job and that this is likely to be recognized and rewarded through obtaining either a promotion or a new job. It may be that many ESOL students are well-educated in their first language and will be able to utilize their existing skills in jobs once they are able to communicate in English. In contrast, while most BE students feel that new skills will improve their job performance, only one-half feel this will lead to a promotion or that they will get a new job. One question which must be addressed is whether this is a true reflection of BE students' job prospects. Do other societal factors, including discrimination or an inability to recognize improved literacy skills, explain these students' pessimism? If so, programs need to work with students and, perhaps, with employers to enable students to apply their skills effectively and to ensure that employers and potential employers are able to recognize the capabilities which the students have gained.

* * *

Adult learners, as well as literacy practitioners and funders, view participation in adult literacy programs not as an isolated experience but as an integral part of the adult participant's life, which will have positive effects in a range of areas. This is reflected in the goals which bring adults

to programs and in the many achievements which these adults derive from their participation. For literacy education to be an effective part of the lives of adults, New York City's programs must provide services which meet the varied needs of an extremely diverse population. First, the educational implications of serving such a variety of students need to be examined. This involves such issues as assessing the need and availability of BENL, math and high-level, particularly conversational, ESOL services. Second, the relationship of education to other aspects of adults' lives, particularly family and employment, must be part of any program development. Adults may require a range of non-literacy services in order to sustain their educational experiences. Instructional services which address job skills and other life skills must be based on the realities of the world in which students live. This means not merely offering instruction in appropriate areas, but working with those outside the literacy community to ensure the recognition and utilization of the new skills of adult learners on the job and in the community. The adults interviewed for this study are committed to their continuing education, and feel that they are gaining useful skills from their participation. It is essential that the services these students and others need be available, that the skills they gain be ones that they will be able to utilize, and that employers and others recognize and value these skills. Literacy learners and practitioners can only work effectively when adult education is seen as an integral part of our communities and a vital aspect of our economy.

APPENDIX A

METHODOLOGY

Data for this investigation were obtained from students and staff at a representative sample of programs during the program year 1987-1988. A stratified random sample of programs was selected using such characteristics as literacy provider agency (LPA)[11], instructional type (i.e., Basic Education, English for Speakers of Other Languages), program size, day/evening classes, geographic location, and other variables.

Approximately 70 classes were chosen from 38 sites. The sample sites represented five of the 13 regions of the Board of Education's ABE/ESL/HSE Services, four of the City University of New York's 15 campuses where adult literacy classes are offered, two of the nine branches of the New York City Public Library which provide literacy services, and 14 of the 35 community-based organizations which offer adult literacy programs. All but two of the selected community-based organizations and one branch of the New York Public Library agreed to participate in the research. The degree to which this method succeeded in obtaining a representative sample of all New York City adult literacy students is discussed in Appendix B.

Within the sample sites, data were obtained from two sources: 1) students, who were interviewed in person; and 2) program managers, who were surveyed by mail.

Student Interviews

A student interview questionnaire was developed specifically for the research described in this report. The instrument was the result of a collaborative effort between the Literacy Assistance Center and Metis Associates. In addition, representatives from the adult education field were consulted. The questions were developed using information obtained from the citywide data base, the existing literature, and a recent ethnographic study of adult Basic Education students

[11] The literacy provider agencies in New York City are the Board of Education, the City University of New York, the Community Development Agency which oversees literacy programs at community-based organizations, and the three public library systems.

commissioned by the Literacy Assistance Center and conducted by M. Trika Smith-Burke (Starting Over: Characteristics of Adult Literacy Learners, 1987).

A draft of the questionnaire was piloted with literacy students and was distributed to the directors of the four literacy provider agencies. Suggestions and modifications were incorporated into the final version of the student questionnaire. The instrument included closed- and open-ended questions pertaining to eight aspects of students' experiences. Sections of the instrument include: (1) demographic information (e.g., date of birth and place of birth); (2) perception of the program (e.g., opinions on the usefulness of program services and activities); (3) reasons for attending the program; (4) self-assessment of achievement and success; (5) employment history; (6) retention and separation (e.g., reasons for possible separation and definition of program completion); (7) educational history; (8) family literacy; and (9) information for follow-up.

In order to conduct interviews with students who were not proficient in speaking English, the instrument was translated into three languages: Spanish; Chinese; and Haitian Creole. In addition, a small number of interviews (9) were conducted in other languages (Polish, Italian, French and Portuguese). In these cases the interviewer translated the English version simultaneously while administering the questionnaire.

Following the development of the study instrument, thirty-nine interviewers, including eight Spanish speakers, four Chinese speakers, four Haitian Creole speakers, and two speakers of other languages, were trained to conduct student interviews. A number of these interviewers were recruited through nominations by individuals in the adult literacy field. Requirements for interviewers included: availability during and after normal working hours (i.e., 9 AM to 5 PM); good interpersonal skills; and experience working with adult education students.

The interviewers were trained by Metis Associates in small groups, in two three-hour sessions held during a single day or on two consecutive days, for a total of six hours. In addition to the training program, the interviewers were monitored by means of tape-recordings of the first two interviews. Finally, at the conclusion of the data collection, interviewers were debriefed and invited to describe their field experiences.

As part of the data collection process, program managers were contacted and informed of the study by the appropriate LPA. When requested, sites were visited to inform site personnel of the research. Site staff were also notified of an interviewer's arrival in advance.

All student interviews were conducted privately during class time. Interviewers escorted each member of the class to a quiet (if possible), pre-arranged area in the building, where the interview took place. Prior to any questioning, the student was read a general introduction explaining the purpose of the study and the confidential nature of all responses, and permission was sought to tape record the session.

Tape-recording was used to help interviewers verify notations from the sessions and to help monitor the interviewers' performance. Almost every student selected agreed to participate in the study and most allowed the session to be tape-recorded. The interviews took 45 to 60 minutes to complete.

During the Spring 1988, 663 student interviews were conducted. Of this total, 55% were conducted in English, 25% were conducted in Spanish, 13% in Haitian Creole, 6% in Chinese, and 1% were conducted in another language (Polish, Italian, French, or Portuguese).

As part of the interview, students were asked to provide information for the anticipated follow-up studies. Names, addresses and telephone numbers were requested so that students could be reached in the future. Of the students interviewed, over 95% provided such information.

Six individuals were trained by Metis Associates to do the initial coding of the student interviews and to enter the data in a computer file. The resulting data were presented to the LAC in a preliminary report in the fall of 1988. In the winter of 1989, a more detailed code book was developed and eight coders were trained by the LAC to code additional aspects of the data. Further statistical analysis was performed by Metis Associates. The preceding report was written using these data and results, combined with the results of the program survey described below.

Program Surveys

Program managers from the selected sites were surveyed to provide data about the programs and their services. A program survey was developed which included six categories of questions. These questions pertained to: (1) program location and accessibility; (2) services offered; (3)

methods of recruitment and orientation for staff and students; (4) number of personnel; (5) types of instruction, levels and settings provided; and (6) mechanisms for student governance. Questions and coding were designed to allow data from the program survey to be linked with related data from the student interviews.

The survey was mailed to twenty-seven program managers, including: five regional coordinators of the selected Board of Education sites; four managers of the selected CUNY sites; twelve managers of the sampled community-based organizations; and six managers of other community-based organizations whose sites serve as host locations for selected Board of Education classes. Twenty-five of the 27 program managers (92.6%) returned completed survey forms. Responses from this survey were coded and entered into an analytic file. The data were joined with data from the student interview for additional analysis.

The two study instruments described above are available from the Literacy Assistance Center upon request.

APPENDIX B

SAMPLE REPRESENTATIVENESS

All of the students who participated in this study attended adult literacy programs funded by New York City or the State of New York. Therefore, information about them is included in the citywide data base of adult literacy students. To determine whether information from the survey could be applied to the general adult literacy population, demographic characteristics of the study participants were compared with demographic characteristics of the total adult literacy population.

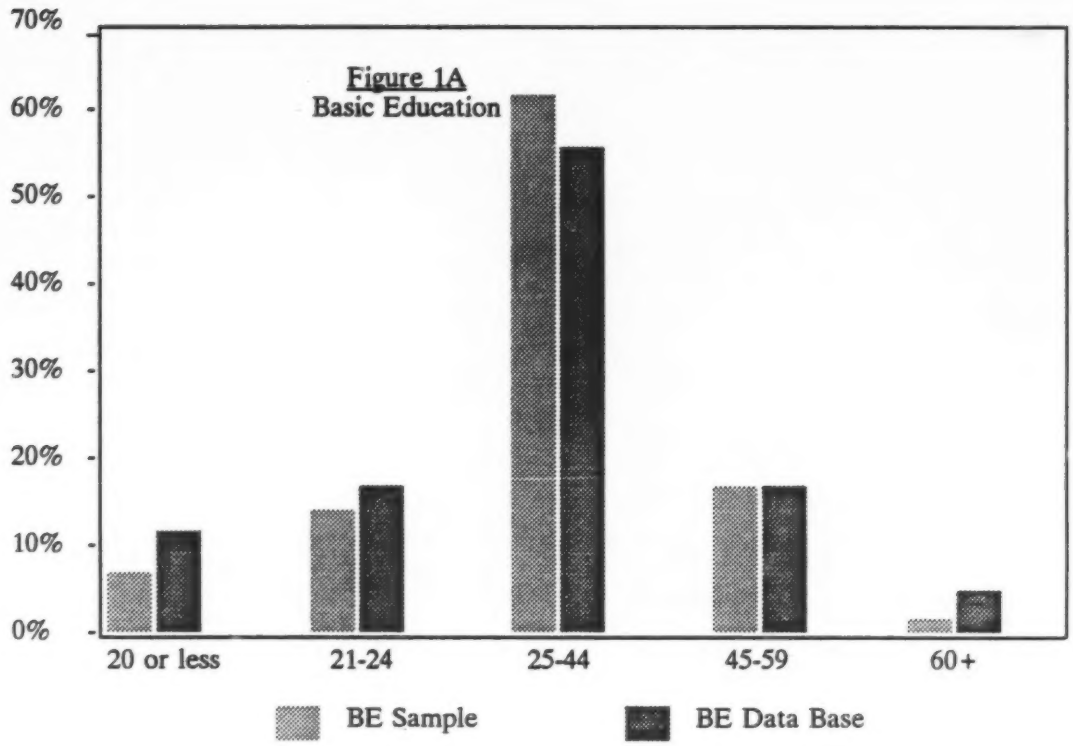
To make this comparison, a cross reference was made on the identification numbers for all 663 students interviewed, and a match was found for 527 of these students. When matches could not be found, it may have been due to incorrect identification numbers recorded by interviewers, or to the failure of programs to submit student record forms. However, information about 527 students is adequate to determine the representativeness of the sample population to the adult literacy population of New York City.

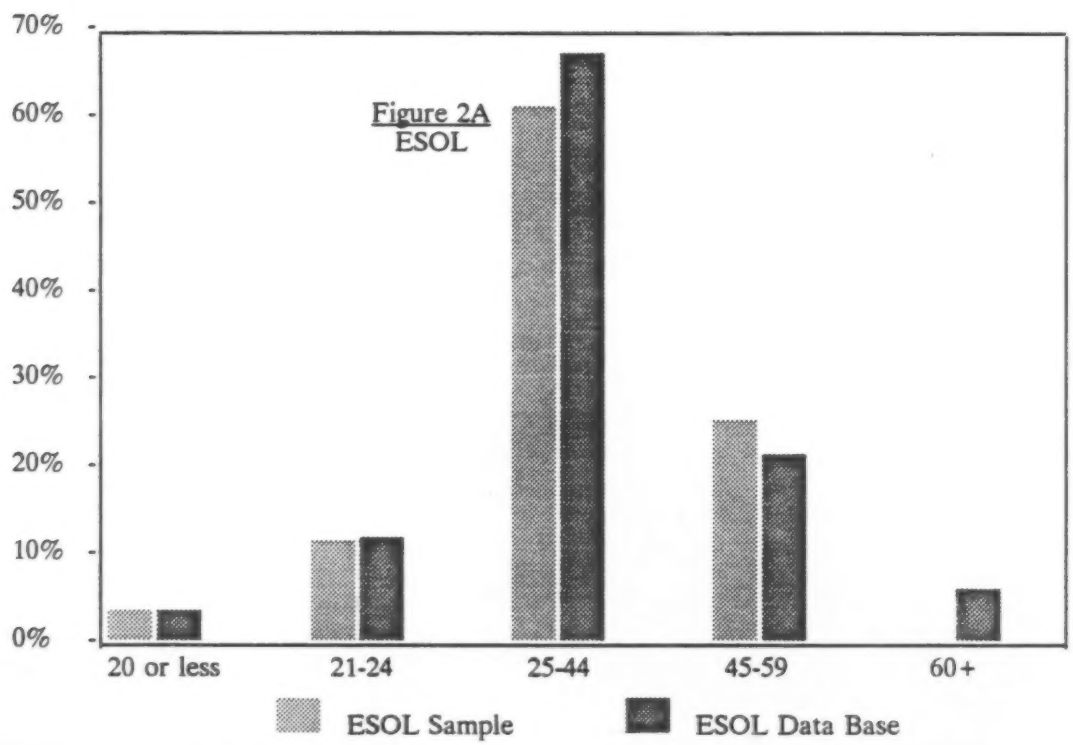
Age

The first characteristic for which the sample data base information was compared with the total data base population was age. As Figure 1A and Figure 2A illustrate, the age distribution for the sample of BE and ESOL students is very similar to the patterns for New York City adult literacy students in general.

Comparison by Age

of Sample and Data Base Population





The ages of over one-half of the students in New York City BE programs fall within the 25-44 year range, followed by those aged 45-59 years and 21-24 years; less than 10% are aged 20 years or under while a handful of students are more than 60 years of age. The overall pattern among students in the sample BE population is the same, although 25-44 year olds make up a somewhat higher proportion and younger students a somewhat lower proportion of the sample than of the full BE population.

The age distribution of ESOL students is similar to that of BE students, although the proportion of ESOL students in the younger age groups is less and the proportion of those aged 25-44 years and 45-59 years is greater than for BE students. The ages of ESOL students interviewed reflect the age distribution of the full ESOL population rather well, although the proportion of students aged 45-59 years is somewhat higher in the sample and the proportion of students aged 25-44 somewhat lower.

Gender

The proportion of female to male students in the general adult literacy population and the sample populations of BE and ESOL students is consistent. Female students comprise more than 60% of the total population while male students comprise approximately 35% of all students.

Table 1A:
Comparison by Gender
for Sample and Data Base Adult Literacy Populations (Percentages)

	BE		ESOL	
	Sample (%)	Data Base (%)	Sample (%)	Data Base (%)
Male	37.8	38.2	34.4	35.4
Female	61.3	59.4	64.9	61.4
Missing	0.9	2.4	0.7	3.2

Race/Ethnicity

Overall, the race/ethnicity pattern for the students interviewed is similar to that of the general adult literacy population, as illustrated in Figures 3A and 4A. Among New York City's BE students, as recorded in the data base, Blacks comprise over one-half of the population while Hispanics constitute over one-fourth. Whites comprise more than 8% while Asians represent less than 5% of the BE students. In the sample of BE students interviewed, there is a slightly lower percentage of Blacks and a much higher proportion of Hispanics than in the general BE population.

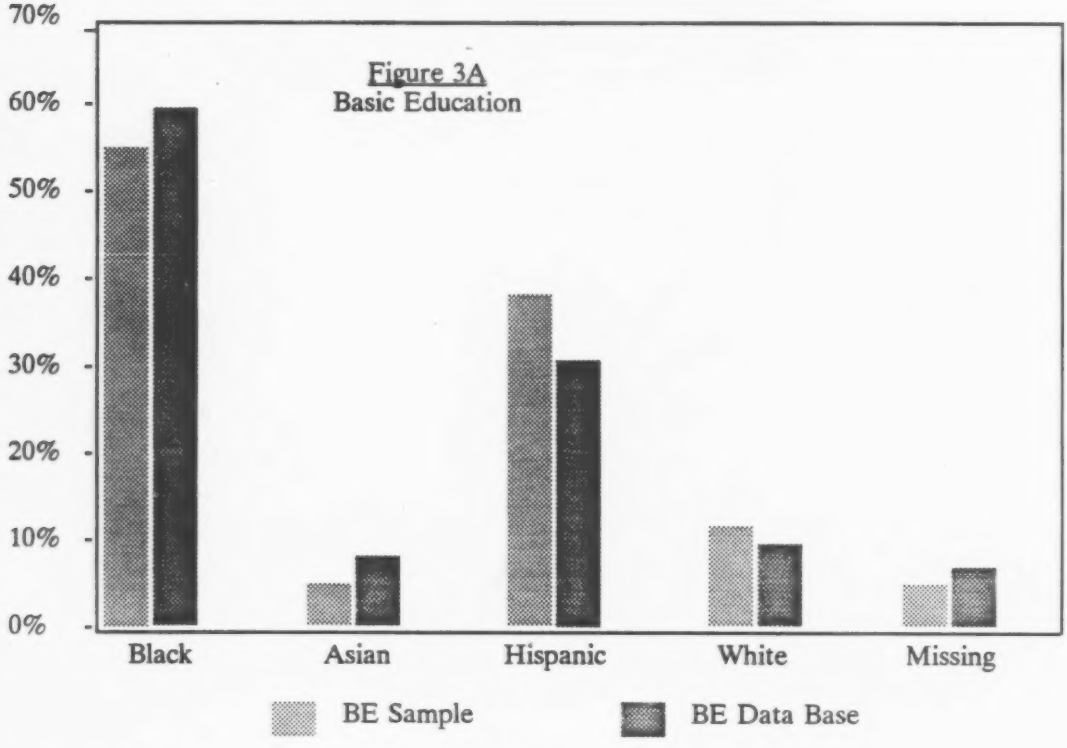
The ESOL population is rather different; Hispanics comprise close to 60% of all ESOL students. They are followed by Asian students who constitute 17% of the ESOL group. Blacks and whites each represent approximately 10% of the ESOL student population. The percentage of Blacks in the ESOL sample is more than twice that of Blacks in the general ESOL population. The proportion of Asians in our study is also slightly higher than the general ESOL population. The discrepancies between the sample and data base populations may in part be due to the selection of programs which specifically serve Caribbean communities.

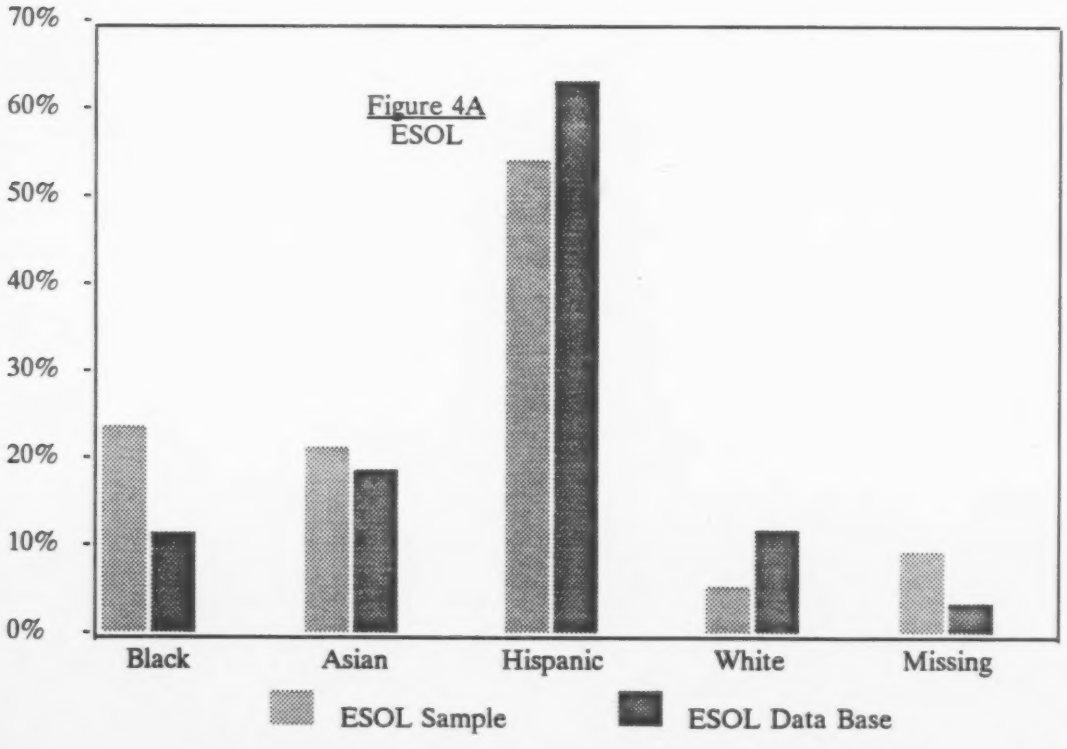
Employment

In general, the employment status of BE and ESOL students is similar for the sample and the data base populations (see Figures 5A and 6A). However, among the BE students interviewed, part-time employees are somewhat under-represented and the percentage of persons not available for work is somewhat higher than in the full data base. The ESOL sample population has a slightly smaller percentage of full-time workers than does the general ESOL population.

Comparison by Race/Ethnicity

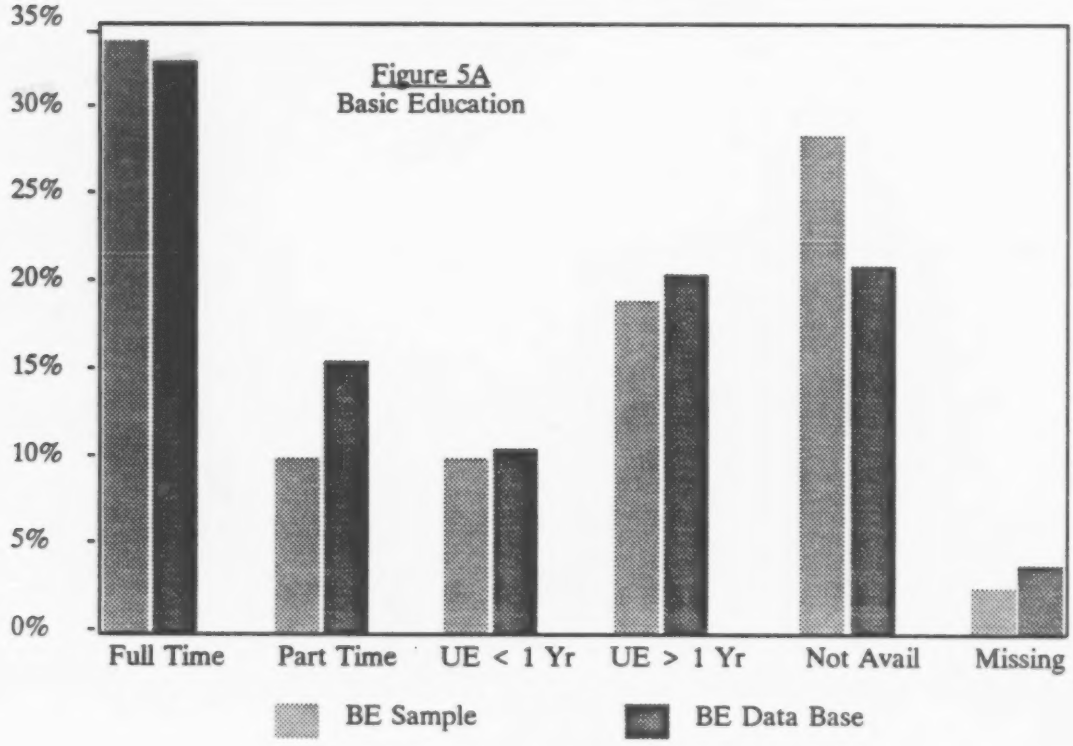
of Sample and Data Base Population

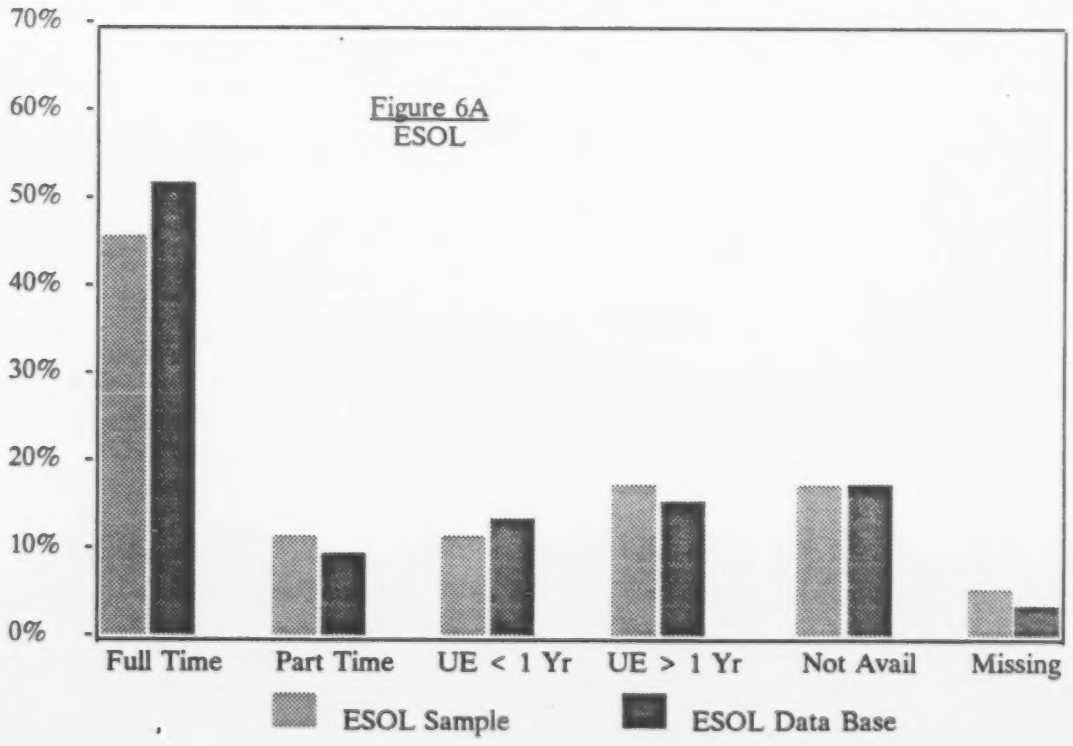




Comparison by Employment Status

of Sample and Data Base Population





Public Assistance

The sample population is broadly representative of the data base population in terms of the percentage of public assistance recipients. Among both BE and ESOL students, however, study participants are somewhat more likely to be receiving public assistance. One reason for this may be the programs from which students were selected. Particular programs may attract or actively recruit individuals who are receiving government benefits; PA recipients may be able to attend day programs while employed students are more likely to attend in the evening.

Table 2A:
Comparison by Public Assistance
for Sample and Data Base Adult Literacy Populations (Percentages)

	BE		ESOL	
	Sample (%)	Data Base (%)	Sample (%)	Data Base (%)
Public Assistance	39.2	27.8	19.0	14.3
No Public Assistance	60.8	72.2	81.0	85.7

Day and Evening Attendance

The proportions of ESOL students in the sample attending day and evening programs is fairly similar to the pattern for student attendance shown in the data base. However, the BE students in the sample population are somewhat more likely to attend classes during the day than are BE students generally; this may be due to factors noted in the previous section.

Table 3A:
Comparison of Program Schedules
for Sample and Data Base Adult Literacy Populations (Percentages)

	BE		ESOL	
	Sample (%)	Data Base (%)	Sample (%)	Data Base (%)
Day	62.2	51.7	29.8	32.6
Evening	37.8	46.3	57.4	63.0
Missing	0.0	2.0	12.8	4.4

Test Scores

The assignment of students to particular class levels upon entry to a program is determined by placement test scores on the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) for BE students and the John Test for ESOL students. These test scores give an estimate of the reading or speaking proficiency of students when they first come to programs.

Table 4A:
Comparison of BE Entry Level
for Sample and Data Base
Adult Literacy Populations (Percentages)

TABE Levels	Sample (%)	Data Base (%)
0-2.9	18.5	12.1
3-4.9	29.7	16.6
5-6.9	30.6	31.4
7-8.9	8.1	20.5
9-12.9	0.0	6.8
Missing	13.1	12.6

For the sample BE population, the percentage of students entering at the two lowest levels is substantially higher than for the data base as a whole, while a much lower percentage of students in the sample entered at the 7-8.9 level. Again this may be due to the programs and class levels from which students were selected. Also, since BE students are supposed to be reading below the ninth grade level, no students with entry TABE scores in the 9-12 range were selected for the study, although some of these students do attend BE classes and are included in the full data base.

Table 5A:
Comparison of ESOL Entry Level
for Sample and Data Base
Adult Literacy Populations (Percentages)

John Test Levels	Sample (%)	Data Base (%)
0-20	47.9	46.0
21-40	16.1	20.7
41-60	15.4	15.9
61 & above	13.8	7.2
Missing	6.9	9.3

The entry level of ESOL students in the sample population is quite representative of the general ESOL population, with one exception: the percentage of the sample population with entry scores of 61 or better is almost twice that of students in the full data base population.

Summary

The representativeness of the sample population to the general population in terms of seven significant variables has been discussed. While there are some subgroups which are slightly over- or under-represented, the general demographic patterns of the sample and the full population are similar. Overall, we may say that the sample population is representative of the general New York City adult literacy population.

APPENDIX C

LAC PUBLICATIONS

Adult Literacy Education: A Review of the Research and Priorities for Future Inquiry, prepared by Gordon G. Darkenwald, Ph.D., 1986

Adult Literacy Information and Evaluation System (ALIES): Background, Status and Future Directions, September 1987

Adult Literacy Program Personnel Profile, prepared by Metis Associates, Inc., 1986

Analysis of New York City's Adult Literacy Data: 1985-1986, prepared by Metis Associates, Inc., 1987

Guide to Needs and Location Map of New York City Literacy Programs, April 1985

New York City Adult Literacy Initiative - Fiscal Year 1986 (Final Report - Summary and Full versions available), 1987

Starting Over: Characteristics of Adult Literacy Learners, prepared by M. Trika Smith-Burke, Ed.D., (Executive Summary included in report), 1987

Study of Adult Literacy Curricula, prepared by Susan Koen, Matrices Consultants, Inc., 1986